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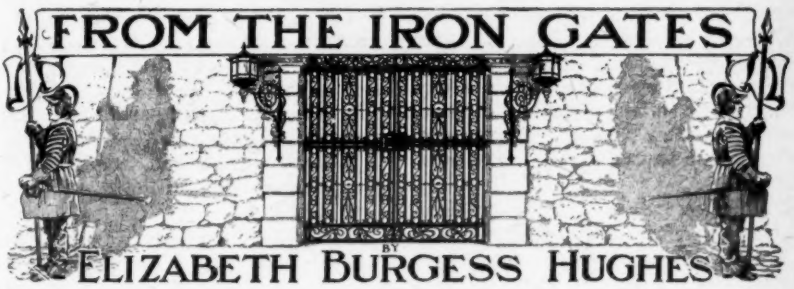
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VOL. XXXV. APRIL, 1915. No. 3.

FROM THE IRON GATES



BY ELIZABETH BURGESS HUGHES

CHAPTER I.

"BUT why, my dear Oliver, does that poor soul, at his time of life and with the worst case of chronic rheumatism in the county, go cavorting about marrying outlandish creatures from the Lord only knows where?"

The meek little man known as "Drucilla Creagh's husband" ventured a faint protest.

"Drucilla, my dearest, he married only one of them."

At which his dearest sniffed. "One of *her* kind, Oliver, is quite sufficient. I call it shameful, positively *shameful*, to bring that person here under the noses of his devoted and lifelong friends and expect us to receive her! I, for one, refuse to do it. I simply will not!"

"Quite right, my dear, of course," her husband agreed vaguely, one eye on the door. "Quite right—ah, quite——"

"She is *outré*—impossible, I tell you! And poor Victor—just a fool, irresponsible and in his dotage! I hope none of his friends will be so *weak-minded* as to encourage him in his madness by calling at the Hall—formally, I mean. For my part, I'm going straight to him—this very afternoon—and let him know without any prevarication whatever exactly where *I* stand in the matter."

"Now, mater," protested her son, who had entered the room in time to hear this promulgation, "don't you go interfering with Carnastor's honeymoon. This is only his second; third time's out, you know. Really, every one ought to be allowed at least two honeymoons in peace. By the way," he added casually, "I heard to-day that Mrs. Carnastor's father was—er—an interesting sort of person. Had every detective in Scotland Yard after him, it seems. Gay old bird, I should think. Exciting, eh?—living with a party like that, and more to the point than being cooped up as landed gentry. It'd beat Panberry to a finish." He yawned and looked out of the window.

"If what you have just said regarding Mrs. Carnastor's—er—parent is true," his mother pronounced, arranging her bonnet strings, "it's proof positive that my duty to Victor must not

be delayed. For my part, nothing I hear surprises me. I tell you, Oliver," she added impressively, turning with a suddenness that made her husband jump, "that woman shall never cross my threshold. I call it a ridiculous proceeding, when Victor could have married Dahlia Allardyce as easily as not, if he was *bent* on marrying! I regard it as a piece of foolishness, his marrying at all. He's ninety if he's a day. He'd much better be making his peace with Heaven, in *my* opinion, than lending himself to such escapades as marriage."

When the lady said "in my opinion," which she often did, she always italicized the middle word. She was fond of italicizing; it gave her opinions added impressiveness. Verily, a person of importance was Drucilla Creagh, and in this most correct and unfashionable precinct, law, gospel, and Mrs. Grundy neatly commingled.

As she now mourned the defection of her friend, Carnastor, the sudden warming of whose ancient blood had set every tongue in Panberry wagging, the green feather on her bonnet waved ominously in the storm of wrath, and her chin worked up and down in a manner most interesting to behold.

"When I think of how long Victor and I have been friends—— The dear fellow, so easily imposed upon in his old age! My love, will you ring again? I wish the carriage *at once*—— When I think of dear Alice, and of how she loved Boswell Hall—then to know that this—this *street gamin* is taking her place——"

Her son whistled. "I say, mater, you're going it strong. How do you know she's a street gamin? Ever seen her?"

"No," admitted Mrs. Creagh, with a feeble undercurrent of regret. "But I have heard enough, on the best authority——"

"The carriage, madam," announced a sonorous voice at the door.

"I shall say to Victor"—the lady turned for a parting shot—"that neither you, Oliver, nor you, Joseph, feel it in you to accept his hospitality for the future when Mrs. Carnastor is to be present. He must know that we can make no compromise. One *must* draw the line in time, or Heaven knows how soon Panberry would be overridden with wild-West house parties and other disgraceful innovations——"

"I say," said her son, brightening at the prospect, "do you think——"

"I *do* think!"

Declining further discussion upon the subject, Mrs. Creagh went out with a majestic rustle of draperies, and the footman drew the portières together. Mr. Creagh looked appealingly at his son.

"Oh, Lord, let her tell him anything!" said that individual, yawning openly. "I'm tired of hearing about it. And you know yourself that the mater's bound to be giving somebody marching orders. Might as well be Carnastor as anybody."

His father coughed nervously.

"Your dear mother is—er—a trifle emphatic," he acknowledged, "but, my son, I cannot allow you to speak disrespectfully of her."

He breathed a sigh of unconscious relief as he sank into a big chair before the hearth and put his feet on the mantel, drawing a pocket copy of "Atalanta in Calydon" from somewhere about his person. He adored Swinburne, but Drucilla strongly disapproved of that amorous poet. She also disapproved of one's putting one's feet on the mantel. Consequently, he regarded both mantel and rhymster as luxuries, and on those rare occasions when his worthy spouse left him to his own devices, he drew a certain amount of satisfaction from these innocent pastimes.

CHAPTER II.

Meanwhile, the honeymoon in question pursued its placid way, in spite of the fact that Panberry pronounced it a wretched mésalliance. There was no denying the fact that they were an odd-appearing pair. Victor Carnastor was old, gray, and rheumatic; his eyes were blurred with the memory of past years and their illnesses and dissipations; he was querulous, gouty, and exacting. Betty, his wife, was young and merry, with a face like a rose and a fluff of flaming hair that brightened the dull streets of Panberry Town when she raced through them.

Inside the four walls that surrounded her gouty spouse, she was a dutiful, sweetly modest, devoted wife. Her husband declared that she was a saint, at which Betty was wont to smile in subdued, wifely fashion and deprecate the praise. But outside the luxurious rooms where he sat confined, one foot bundled in white, helpless-looking bandages—truly, he was a romantic figure to inspire devotion in the blooming Betty!—the young wife filled her days with the doubtful occupation of galloping over the country on a thoroughbred "racer" with a pack of dogs at her heels—for all the world, said Mrs. Creagh, as if she were some vulgar squire—and alarming the rustic dwellers therein, when they happened to meander across her path, by urging her horse over a six-foot fence as calmly as if it had been a six-inch gully.

Had it been in "ye days of witchcraft," doubtless the lady would have been pronounced possessed of the evil eye and promptly burned. No such authority belonging to the onlookers, they merely dubbed her "a wild piece," and kept the even tenor of their way—more uneven, it must be confessed, than of yore, owing to my lady's propensity for darting at them suddenly from behind hedges and fence rows upon the little thin black horse that seemed almost part and parcel of its owner. It was rumored, too, that she was a "dead shot," and this fact—if fact it was—kept Panberry at a respectful distance, for there was no certainty that this young savage would hesitate to shoot off a head that she especially disliked.

The evening after Mrs. Creagh's visit she came into her husband's study—a courtesy title of the big, splendidly decorated room in which he spent much of his time—in one of the ultra-feminine gowns she affected indoors—which gave her the appearance of an absolutely conventional woman who preferred having even her thoughts made to order—and sat like a trusting child on the hassock at his feet while he lamented the loneliness and lack of companionship in her life.

She laughed amusedly.

"What a dear you are! Companions? I have all I need, dear—you and—and nature. I took quite a long walk today. The woods are beautiful. See!" She drew something from her belt. "I gathered these for you." With a shy gesture she laid a handful of wild white violets on the sleeve of his dressing gown.

Carnastor was quite visibly touched, but he looked rather helplessly at the little fragrant things. Flowers were not in his line, he admitted to himself, though he had sent tons of hothouse beauties to his feminine friends. Yet somehow these little wild, white blossoms reminded him of his Betty, God's latest and best gift to him.

He ruffled the hair on the low white forehead—Betty was never "made up," so he had no fear of being rebuked for such demonstrations—and a sudden chivalry stirred within him that he hadn't known existed.

"What a child of nature you are!" he ruminated. "What other woman would be satisfied with your daily rou-

tine—your greatest diversion a country ramble or a canter on Bluebell? That you are contented reveals the wonderful simplicity and naturalness of your heart and mind."

Betty said nothing. There were some details in her daily routine of which her lord and master knew nothing. Moreover, he hated a "horsy" woman, or a masculine one. If he was of the conviction that she rode Bluebell instead of Beelzebub—a conviction fostered by Betty herself—all well and good; why disturb the dear old soul in his blissful ignorance? As for her shooting—dear me! If this funny old man knew that she did not grow properly hysterical at the sight of firearms, like the rest of her sex, he would curl up and die. Why not let him cherish his pretty dream in peace?

"Dearest," he said presently, seeing that she did not answer, "I received a call this afternoon from Mrs. Creagh —*the* Mrs. Creagh."

"Yes?" inquired Betty politely, but without interest.

He had been wondering how to introduce the subject of that afternoon's disclosures. Having proceeded thus far, he plunged in boldly.

"Sweet, the woman really—er—dislikes you, and she has never even met you. Disgusting in her, I call it. At first, she studiously avoided mention of you. However, I forced the matter upon her. I asked her to chaperon you to a dance at the Armstrongs' on the twenty-fifth."

Betty's eyes dropped modestly to hide their sudden, wicked gleam.

"And—she said?"

"She said"—Carnastor paused to gather his words dramatically together —"that she had made other plans."

"What did you expect?" asked Betty sweetly. "Rude old thing!"

"Oh, my dear, she had no idea she was being rude. She was merely 'asserting her authority.' She said that she had her daughter and her niece to see after. Betty, the old frump means to cut you! Now, do you know what I'm going to do?" went on the outraged gentleman. "I mean to have Dahlia Allardyce down to chaperon you to this very dance. I shall have my banker bring out all the Carnastor jewels—should you like them reset, my dear?—and you must go as an East Indian princess or some such character, which will give you an excuse for wearing all of them, and the handsomest gown that Georgette can get together——"

He concentrated upon the plan of campaign, while the girl reflected, with a touch of pity for the grim old worldling who was so wholly of that stratum of society which wages its battles by aid of baubles and materialism, that this was scarcely the way she would have set about winning over Panberry, had she desired this especial thing—which, it so happened, she did not.

"Oh, no," she soothed. "Really, I don't want to go at all. And please don't ask Miss—— anybody to come. Let's forget about it, and I'll stay quietly at home with you. That will be pleasanter for me than any number of balls."

"Surely you don't mean that, my dear?"

"But indeed I do! Really, I don't like balls."

"My dear Betty, at your age you'd hardly be human if you didn't! I want you to have the pleasures of youth while you may. You'll have a long time to sit by the fire. It's only because you're unaccustomed to society that you fancy yourself at odds with it. You'll enjoy it all, once you're launched."

A little quiver of loneliness crept into his voice; it would be hard to sit at home and nurse his gout with Betty turning the heads of half the gallants in the place, but for her sake he would endure it. The poor child had led a wretched life hitherto; if she did not

have a pleasant time of it hereafter, it wouldn't be *his* fault. Heaven bless his little girl! She had been knocked about the world long enough. And how good and sweet and innocent she had remained, in spite of it all!

Betty put his tender eulogies to flight suddenly.

"If you love me, Victor," she said passionately, "you will see to it that I am never 'launched,' as you call it! I detest being snubbed by Mrs. Creagh—did you know all the tradespeople ironically call her 'the duchess'?—but not even to inconvenience her will I mingle with her odious circle."

This was speaking warmly—for Betty. Mr. Carnastor looked dismayed.

"I can't understand your aversion to the good things of life, my dear," he fretted. His wife had paused before an antique mirror overhanging an old-fashioned secretary. She laughed up at her own image quite frankly; there was a look on the small, subtle face that would have puzzled her loyal spouse had he seen it. "I have known many women, but not one before I met you who, with your youth and beauty and brains, was content to bury herself in a musty old Hall with a gouty, crabbed old man like me. Most women——"

Betty Carnastor came gently behind his chair and laid her warm arms about his neck.

"Dear Victor," she said patiently, "I'm not 'most women.' Did you never know any one who was different—who really didn't care for Society—the kind you spell with a capital S?"

"Well, yes," he admitted reluctantly, as if dragging a family skeleton to the light. "My mother, for instance. She never cared for such things. And my sister, Griselda, is—peculiar. Mother was a bluestocking, and literary women have no friends, you know. Griselda, poor dear, was born so homely and gawky that not even being the sister of a famous 'beau' could hoist her into popularity."

"It must be *dear* to have a family," sighed Betty. "I think your sister is quite nice. I saw her once in her carriage before a bookstall. She isn't pretty, of course, but she has a distinguished, I-am-Cæsar sort of air that is better for some women than beauty, and it goes so well with her white hair and her wonderful clothes. She's quite proud of her name, isn't she?"

"Foolishly so, I'm afraid. She hasn't many friends, poor girl! She never had the knack of treating people courteously."

"I wonder"—and in spite of the troubled tone of her low voice there was a defiant gleam in Betty's eyes—"what she will think of *me?*"

Her listener squirmed uncomfortably.

"I don't know, dear. Let's hope for the best. What Griselda thinks won't materially change our destinies. Now, Miss Allardyce can be of some service to you; Griselda never could."

"I should think not!" agreed Mistress Betty internally. "Horrid old dowd—with her rouged face, her wig, and her costly, barbarous clothes!" Aloud she said: "And who is Miss Allardyce, dear?"

"Miss Allardyce," informed her husband, "is an old friend of mine—a very dear friend, indeed. At one time"—he paused to let the vision of a stately girl with blond hair and luminous eyes pass his mental horizon—"people said she was in love with me."

"Ah!" Mrs. Carnastor sat up suddenly. "That was quite possible, I should think, Victor. Is she—old?"

"Not so very. Only seventy or thereabouts. But you'll see her soon. She'll take you about; she's spry as a schoolgirl, Dahlia is."

"Dahlia? What a—charming name!" cooed Betty. She had been about to say "ridiculous." "Do you suppose she

would feel any scruples about chaperoning *me?*"

With a little frown, her husband glanced up at her. She had risen and was standing before him, her hands crossed behind her—as young and lithe as he was old and crippled, and the contrast struck him unpleasantly.

"My dear child, why should she? She's so thoroughly my friend that she would make any reasonable sacrifice, were it necessary, to further my happiness. Anyway, I am sure she'll love you for yourself. You're charming enough to make friends of your own, if you would only exert yourself, and go about and meet people. You're a very attractive woman, Betty, though you seem to be ignorant of the fact."

"Not so ignorant as you think," observed Mistress Betty to herself. But she made no such remark to the old man, who was devouring her with passionate, adoring eyes. Instead, she looked at him with a spice of harmless coquetry in her glance and murmured:

"Love is blind, Victor. No one else will ever see me with your eyes."

"They won't? Just you wait and see, my lady. What are you going to do when some young swain raves about the light that lies within your eyes and assures you that he will most certainly die without you and implores you to flee with him to some distant shore or suggests that you put rat poison in your husband's champagne——"

"Oh, Victor," cried his wife in pretty distress, "you don't think any one could ever be so wicked, do you?"

"You'll never let your heart be lured away, darling?" he begged. "You'll still love the old man better than any one else and be faithful to him until he is gone, won't you? Sometimes I wonder what good I ever did that God rewarded me by giving me you, beloved."

He drew her into the shelter of his arms, shrinking under a twinge that passed through the gouty foot and rheumatic legs.

"Surely, Victor, you don't doubt me?" murmured his beloved.

"Sooner an angel out of heaven, dear heart."

"You're quite right. Never, never doubt that I am yours entirely. Other men are to me as shadows. You are my kind, good friend, my husband, my lover, all in one. Now say good night and let me go. I believe I'm rather tired with my long tramp over the hills."

He held her close, and kissed her again and again, in a blaze of fervor that hid the fact that she winced at the touch of the withered lips on her fresh mouth.

"My little girl! My blessed little girl!"

She drew herself gently away at last, and went toward the door. On the threshold she paused to look back over her shoulder, her laughing face alight with mischief, and, flinging him a kiss from the tips of airy fingers, ran lightly from his sight.

Carnastor made a sudden, impetuous movement, as if to follow her, but the rheumatic legs protested, and he fell back impotently. A grave, amused smile twisted the corners of his mouth.

"The little witch!" he muttered. "She'd turn any man's head. Oh"—with a long, impatient sigh—"if I were only thirty again!"

Once outside the door, a peculiar change came over Mistress Betty. The innocent coquetry of her face faded, giving place to a hard sternness that transformed the young features with the swiftness of a mask. Her breast heaved with convulsive laughter. She rubbed her lips roughly with her satin sleeve where the old man's kiss had rested. On her way up the staircase, the hard, unyouthful merriment threatened to overwhelm her; she leaned heavily against the dark, carved woodwork that brought out gloriously the

tints of her red hair, and gave way to helpless laughter.

"Oh, it's better than a play!" she cried, in a low, strangled whisper. "Poor fool—poor old doting fool! Betty, my dear, it's fine fun; but if you don't look sharp, your house of cards will tumble. I don't say there's any immediate danger, mind, but it's always well to be careful."

CHAPTER III.

At best Panberry Prison was gloomy. Old-world, remote, caught in the backwaters of a negligent civilization, for almost unnumbered years it had stood in a retired spot on the outskirts of the town. Panberry was rather proud of it than otherwise. It is not every hamlet that can boast a romantic-looking stone prison, set among whispering trees and hinting vaguely at unnamable things.

It gave one a delicious, creepy sensation to look at those black prison bars slurring their shadows across God's free sunlight upon the greensward of summer or the snow pall of winter, and to think of what lay behind them—shame and crime and terror, never to be lifted for many a trapped soul until the great Judge at the bar of His tribunal perhaps offered something better than man-made justice.

They were strong and safe, those unwieldy black bars, otherwise Panberry might have felt less complacent over her peculiar possession.

When all other diversions failed and ennui loomed large on the horizon, Panberry escorted its house parties through the prison, and it never failed to satisfy the most sanguine expectations. The long rows of gloomy cells, iron-barred, the flagged corridors, the old-fashioned iron gateways—not to mention the inmates of the place—were all a source of breathless interest.

"Really," the visitors would confide to one another, in astonishment, "there are some rather good faces in that place." And they would ponder deeply, as if a criminal were some new species of animal, very far removed indeed from polite society.

"See here, girls!" cried Miss Digby-Coles, one of a party whom Mrs. Creagh was showing over the place. "Isn't this a pretty name?"

She paused before a door above which, as had been the custom there for almost a century, a card indexed the occupant as if he had been an animal in a stall. In its stagnant backwater, with still more stagnant officials in charge, the prison and its customs had eddied to one side and remained so, always with the promise of better things tomorrow—and so the years had droned away.

"Alaric Cathcart, aged thirty-seven." Miss Digby-Coles mused over the name. "I wonder what he's here for. It's rather an aristocratic name—Cathcart. I knew some Cathcarts in Lincolnscourt—quite the best people. And in New Hope there were——"

Her voice trailed away rather purposelessly. For the prisoner of a sudden had lifted his head, and, instead of the usual glance of sullen defiance from beneath unkempt brows, she met a pair of amused, tolerant eyes, of a startling blue, with drifting shadows under black lashes.

"Well!" exclaimed the young woman, retiring precipitately. "If this isn't *terrible!*"

"What's the matter?" asked a sympathetic young man in the party.

"I feel as if I'd been guilty of some awful faux pas," she muttered. "Did you see him? Why, he's a *gentleman*, and that look of his fairly shriveled me! I feel like——"

She was interrupted by a general movement down the corridor. Miss Digby-Coles, however, did not stir. She was staring with fascinated eyes into Cell No. 18, and she had forgotten to jest.

"It is—it is—indeed, I almost believe it is——"

"What is it, dear?" asked one of the other girls.

"The Reverend Stirling Cathcart, Henrietta, of New Hope—this man looks like him. Didn't the Reverend Stirling have a wayward son—or nephew? There was a black sheep somewhere, I'm sure."

"I've forgotten, love. See, they're leaving. Come along!"

But as they trailed down the narrow, creaking stairs, Miss Digby-Coles lingered a moment behind the others.

"For what particular offense is Number Eighteen here, doctor?" she asked the old chaplain.

He regarded her confidentially.

"Forgery, my dear. And theft. He's a 'professional.'"

CHAPTER IV.

The afternoon of the twentieth brought Miss Allardyce to Boswell Hall. She was a pleasant-looking person, with a rather bourgeois face, and a perpetual, white-toothed smile that beamed alike on the just and the unjust. She descended upon her host in a whirl of bonnet feathers, silken flounces, and high-heeled shoes, the latter seeming scarcely adequate to her weight, which was no trifle, though of this the lady herself was placidly ignorant. She still fancied herself a sylph—a bit matured, possibly, but by no means laid on the shelf at the early age of seventy. She told herself, quite frequently, that she was just beginning to live. There was no doubt that in her the zest of life still bubbled boilingly. She was very far removed from the cap-and-chimney-corner existence of many of her contemporaries.

Mrs. Carnastor, in an afternoon gown of white with a thoughtful touch of lavender about the Greek waistline and in the abbreviated sleeves, stood where the sunlight fell upon her red-gold hair and pensive face, the shining hair giving to the bewildered visitor much the impression of a halo

"Mercy!" she said within herself. "I hope Victor hasn't picked up a saint in his dying moments." She advanced upon the recumbent figure in the big morris chair with some misgivings.

"My *dear* Dahlia!" observed her host kindly. "It was very good of you to come. You're looking wonderfully well. This is Betty," turning to the figure by the window, which had not intruded upon his welcome of his old friend. "Come here, dear!"

Betty came, the very picture of girlish shyness. Her youthful charm won over at once the good-natured woman who had adored her husband.

"You dear little thing!" gushed Miss Allardyce. "Why, Victor, she's just out of the nursery, isn't she?"

"Oh, no—I'm twenty-one," said Betty modestly, as if confessing to the burden of great age. She *was* twenty-one, with seven years added; this, however, is a detail—she could look nineteen or forty, as the occasion demanded.

"A real little nun," pronounced the visitor. "Where did you ever meet her, Victor?"

"That's a long story, Dahlia. I'll tell you about it some day. But I'm sure you're tired now. Perhaps you'd better rest until dinner."

She obeyed good-naturedly, and took Betty away with her.

"I'm dying to know how you ever came to marry Victor Carnastor, darling," she confided, when the two were alone together in her room. She had laid aside her traveling gown, and, assisted by her maid, had got into a wonderful dressing gown embroidered with dragons. The rouged and enameled face that, under its modish veil, had looked scarcely forty, was pitilessly revealed in the sunshine of the late afternoon. She thrust out two well-shaped

feet in crimson satin slippers, and surveyed them while she attempted a "pumping" process—which was, however, it may as well be stated, a dismal failure.

"Why shouldn't I have married him?" asked Betty, with wide, thoughtful eyes. "He was very kind and good to me. I was all alone in the world." The round chin quivered ominously.

"But, dear me, little one, didn't you love him at all?" cried the lady of the dragons.

"Oh, indeed, yes; almost as dearly as I loved my father! In fact, he seemed almost like father to me." Both Mr. Carnastor and Betty's father, the gay and festive Jack Donohue, would probably have been astounded at this comparison, could they have heard it.

Miss Allardyce broke into subdued laughter.

"I hope you didn't tell him that," she said.

"Who—my husband? But he knew that I loved him."

"As a father?"

Betty gazed at her visitor with troubled eyes. What did this woman find to laugh at so continually, she seemed to ask.

"You poor—baby!" cried the compassionate lady of the dragons. "You don't know even the rudiments of love. I'll wager you don't know there *is* such a thing as sexual love."

Betty lowered her eyes meditatively.

"Well, never mind. You're much happier than if you did. To taste the wine of passion is to crave it forever afterward. I won't ask you any more questions of that sort."

She rattled on upon every subject under the sun, like a friendly phonograph wound for an hour; but when she veered upon the dance set for the twenty-fifth, Betty steered her skillfully away from the topic.

"What will she say when she finds I'm not going?" she thought. "And she came down on purpose for it, too. Well, I shan't go, dearly as I'd love to, and there's an end on't!"

"May I help you?" she asked aloud, as the other woman frankly drew down her thin, much-becrinkled tresses, plentifully helped out by a startling array of braids and puffs that lay ignominiously in a tumbled heap on the rug, where they had fallen.

"No, dearest. Thank you, just the same. I'll ring for Yvonne. Oh, well, if you really wish to brush it—— Such a soothing touch as you have, my dear! I wonder if Vic—if your husband appreciates the jewel he has won."

Mrs. Carnastor smiled, intrenched behind the plump scarlet back.

"Oh, I think so!" she replied carelessly. "He's very good. What lovely soft hair, dear Miss Allardyce!"

This last remark, uttered in the fervent and sincere voice that the gentleman in question had found enchanting, clinched the matter. Dahlia Allardyce was Betty's friend, though the heavens fell.

At dinner, when the guest appeared appareled in misty blue with sapphires in her hair, preceded by Betty, whose toilet had absorbed probably fifteen minutes—she was addicted to slinky, "one-piece" frocks that were convenient to slip on, and the bright thickness of her hair needed only an upward rake and a downward pull to be absolutely ravishing—Carnastor reflected that beside her Betty looked like an immature schoolgirl.

"Upon my soul, Dahlia, you're handsomer than ever!" he exclaimed, as she swept to her place. He had insisted upon being wheeled in, and now sat smiling at them, with Roberts, his confidential bodyguard, behind his chair.

"It's easy enough for you to talk, Victor, but you know very well that beside this lovely child"—encircling the pensive Betty with a plump arm—"I'm a horrid, wrinkled old woman. Does he

ever tell you that he thinks you're pretty, my dear?"

Thus questioned, Betty laughed outright, and shook her head.

"She's a sad prevaricator, Dahlia. Indeed, I do tell her. She knows what I think of her. Ask her."

Miss Allardyce, glancing from the love-lit old face to the cool young wife, felt a sharp, unreasonable tug at her heart.

"She doesn't love him," she thought. "She doesn't know what love means."

Mrs. Carnastor, looking up, caught her glance, and, in spite of herself, colored hotly. With a sudden, awkward swirl of her sleeve, she swept a goblet from the table, and in the little stir that followed they did not see the impatient shrug of her shoulders, the momentary fire of her lowered glance.

The dinner was a merry one. Recovering from the quick suspicion that Miss Allardyce was watching her—and the girl dared not hint to her own soul just what she feared her guest might know—Betty became as cheery as the thrushes that sang outside the windows in the early morning. The two old friends openly enjoyed each other's company. When at last they repaired to the big, shadowy drawing-room, the master of the house not lingering to smoke, as was his custom, they found themselves an oddly assorted group.

"Now, what shall we do?" demanded Miss Allardyce. "You play, Betty?"

"A little."

"Suppose you play for us; then—just a bit. After that, we'll have a game of chess—I'm still a chess fiend, Victor. May I smoke, dearie?"

Betty looked a trifle shocked.

"Oh, dear, Victor, why didn't you prepare her for the wickedness she was to encounter? My love, a woman who doesn't smoke isn't considered respectable. We all do. No doubt you will, too, after a while. See!" She took a Russian cigarette from an exquisitely jeweled and monogrammed case and puffed away genially. It was no fashionable pretense; she really smoked, and derived therefrom an immense amount of satisfaction.

Betty went across the long room to the piano, and while the two old friends nodded and talked and quarreled by the fire, the girl played. At first it was something low and light and soft, as unnoticeable as summer rain upon the roof. Slowly it deepened until the wind was heard moaning through the trees. It was as if one were watching a storm rising quietly out of the east. As it went on, it gathered force, until the room seemed to vibrate with the passion of thunder. Then it died away in low, unhappy mutterings. But the sound of the rain on the roof kept on, insistent, pattering, sweet. A sunbeam slanted across the rain, and caught the reflection of a rainbow set in a pale-sapphire sky. Scents of spring violets and narcissus filled the air. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the spring scene faded. The notes crashed discordantly—a turbulent flood of sound that filled the long room with complaint; and the speech that throbbed through this strange musical fantasy was a cry of sorrow too deep for words.

The two nodding, gossiping old people by the fire looked at the vague figure at the end of the vista of French sofas and spindle-legged chairs as through a maze of unreality. A sort of fear came upon Dahlia Allardyce; she shrank nearer her old friend and attempted to speak, but the words died in her throat.

For a time the music crept on—a shivering, broken throb that went to the heart like the pleading of a child or of a dumb animal—then it died away uncertainly; and Betty rose from her stool with a light, teasing laugh.

"I believe you're both asleep," she said, approaching. To the other woman her figure looked strangely large and white as she drew near—like some

grand-browed, avenging fate. It was an optical illusion, she decided, for suddenly the familiar room took on its homelike, ordinary aspect, and the mist faded from her eyes.

"My dear Victor," she cried airily, though her voice trembled, "surely you haven't married a professional?"

"Oh, no!" cried the old man, startled. "She merely plays very well."

"Very well! I should say so! My dear, what masters have you had?"

"None," answered Mrs. Carnastor slowly.

"None! Do you mean——"

"Let the child alone, Dahlia," advised Carnastor impatiently. He remembered that Betty's early training had not admitted music masters—or very much else. "It's what the footman would call a 'natural gift.' Many people are born musical. Now, for instance, take Madame Scarborough. You remember how she——"

Miss Allardyce may have remembered the lady in question, but she failed to hear the airy outline of her musical career; her mind was busy. Troop after troop of surmises thronged her thoughts. All but the letter of this strange music had escaped Betty's husband, but to his old friend it had meant that the girl uttered in music what her lips dared not frame. She had thought her an ignorant ingénue; already she had become a puzzle.

After the game of chess had begun, Betty took up a book.

"You don't mind if I read, do you?" she asked. "I don't care for chess."

"Bless your dear heart, child, do exactly as you like. You've many years yet ahead of you to devote to chess."

And Miss Allardyce did not know that over the edge of her book Mrs. Carnastor was watching the two old people with genuine amusement and a certain crafty tolerance, and that she was reflecting that chess would never interest her as long as she could watch people—not if she lived to be a hundred.

"Poor old man, he seems quite happy! What a pity he didn't marry Miss Allardyce! They could have played chess day and night, if they had liked. The dear soul, how I've puzzled her! I believe she was actually afraid of me tonight."

The book she held was "De Imitatione Christi," and it was upside down.

The following morning Miss Allardyce "ran over" to see her friend, Mrs. Creagh. At luncheon time she returned, overflowing with news of the Armstrongs' dance.

"Betty, dear, it's sure to be a success. Florists and caterers and Havelin's Band are to come down from the city. It's the talk of the country."

"The foolish child refuses to go," fretted the master of the house. "And the squire sent a personal invitation, while his wife——"

"*Betty!* What do you mean, child? I wouldn't dream of missing it! Wild horses couldn't keep me away! Why, a masquerade ball is no end of fun, and think of the beaux and the flattery——" She stopped to laugh cheerfully. "Oh, yes, I know that's the proper word for it—flattery. They don't mean anything, but it's pleasant, just the same."

Betty Carnastor sat up with suddenly sparkling eyes; a crimson glow rushed from throat to brow.

"It's to be a masquerade, then?" she asked breathlessly.

"Oh, yes. I've been wondering what 'garbage'—as a certain dear old soul with more money than learning is reported to have said—would be most becoming to me."

"Hebe, dear friend—or Aurora. They would suit you admirably." A sly smile curved the speaker's lips as he looked across the table at her.

"For shame, Victor, to make sport of an old woman! Now, my dear girl,

what's this nonsense I hear about your not wanting to go?"

Betty took up a cluster of purplish grapes and held them in the palm of her small, strong hand. Her glance rested thoughtfully upon them while Miss Allardyce waited for her to speak.

"I—I think I've changed my mind, Victor," she said at last. "If you really want me to go——"

Miss Allardyce caught at the note of yielding.

"It's always a woman's prerogative to change her mind, my dear," she observed. "Of course you're going. Why shouldn't you? You can't be a nun forever."

"A nun?" repeated Betty, laughing, as she ran up the stairs in advance of the others. "*I* a nun!" She stopped short, with a chuckle of glee. "The very thing! I'll go to the Armstrongs' as a nun."

CHAPTER V.

"Dear me, Betty, do you think I look a frump?" asked Miss Dahlia Allardyce, in agitation.

She stood before the long mirror in her dressing room, attired as Josephine Bonaparte, and in the short-waisted satin gown of blue shot through with gold, a younger and prettier woman would have been wholly fascinating, for the gown, the headdress nodding with golden plumes, the blue satin shoes delicately embroidered in pale butterflies, the long, soft gloves, were all charming. Above the elaborate gown and its youthful accessories Miss Allardyce's motherly old face dawned upon one with something of a shock.

"You look lovely, dear Miss Allardyce," Betty assured her solemnly. She was in secret convulsions, but her face was quite grave. This ancient belle was to her a source of never-failing amusement.

"You dear child, I hope others will look at me with your eyes. There was a time, darling"—with a long sigh—"when I was the belle of every function I attended. It's downright hard, I declare, to be put aside—laid on the shelf, as it were, when only yesterday men hung on one's every word, while the women were green with envy."

"You're not on the shelf yet, dear lady. You don't look a day over fifty."

"Oh, that's bad enough, when I want to look twenty-five. But if society expects me to relegate myself to the fireside with rheumatism and lace caps, it will find itself very much mistaken. What a pity dear Victor is unable to go! One must give up somewhere, I suppose, and admit that at last one is old, though I, for my part, shall never do it short of a hundred."

She pulled the black mask over her eyes.

"Are you quite ready, love? I do wish you'd chosen some other costume. You look entirely too subdued beside this giddy get-up of mine. It ought to have been reversed."

The lady of Boswell, in the long, dull robe of a nun, her flaming hair tucked out of sight under the black cap and veil that mark the Sister of Charity—and that transformed the appearance of the merry girl into that of a quiet and rather sorrowful woman—lifted her eyes to the gay figure reflected in the quaint old mirror that had seen many charming women. Behind the blue form of Josephine the black robes had a certain gloomy distinction, and the broad, white band across Betty's forehead seemed to subdue the lively features into thoughtful melancholy.

"Upon my soul, Betty, no human being would ever recognize you! You make me feel old and foolish—and sinful. You look like some grand young heretic about to be burned at the stake. Do try to smile a bit. You give me the shivers in that black thing." She touched the girl's cheek lightly with her

ringed hand. "Now put on your mask. Let us go."

"I must say good night to my husband."

"Ah—so you must. I'd forgotten. You see, I have so few women friends who remember to say good-by to anybody—much less a husband. Don't delay, you dear little model of the dutiful wife, or we shall be late, and I don't want to miss a single dance."

Betty went into her husband's room with the noiseless movements of a house cat.

"Heavens, child! You startled me. I didn't recognize you at first. Well, I agree with Dahlia that you look like a young saint. I saw her a few moments ago, and she confided to me in a stage whisper that your 'get-up' gave her the *creeps*. Of course, dear, I'd rather you wore the jewels, but you look fetching, anyway, and I'm so glad you're going. I shall miss you, though."

Betty leaned over him with her slow, young smile.

"Shall I put a glass of wine beside you, Victor, in case you feel like having it while I'm away?"

"It's thoughtful of you to suggest it. Tell Roberts to bring it."

"Oh, no, let *me* get it. I'm always happy when I can serve you in little ways."

He watched her tenderly as she trailed her black robes through the doorway. "Bless the dear girl! Who would ever guess that she'd been born in a hotbed of iniquity? Of course, now and then a bit of slang or a reference to her old life escapes her—it would be odd if this never happened—but I love her all the more for the fact that she has so quickly overcome past tendencies and associations."

In the midst of his meditations, Betty returned with the wine, and, dropping a parting kiss upon his head, departed in the wake of Madame Bonaparte, whose golden plumes nodded festively in the moonlight as they crossed the path to the waiting carriage.

The great house of Squire Armstrong was lighted brilliantly. The florists from the city had done their work well, and the celebrated Havelin's Band were making their palm-secluded corner vibrant with melody.

It was a fairylike scene, and the motley assembly gave it an air of unreality. It was almost weird, one might say, to see the past and present so mingled. Over here a group of pilgrims of the time of Chaucer mingled with a circle of Parisian dames of the present day, dames of high degree, most of them, and much charm, though now and then a flower girl in picturesquely poor attire came to view in the ever-changing kaleidoscope. There were belles and beaux of every age and place; monks, scholars, and dancers; priests and butterflies; saints and devils—all in one moving, conglomerate mass.

Betty Carnastor stood on the threshold and gasped with pleasure. The *girl* in her came to the surface at a leap; she forgot the years back of her, with their burden of shame and concealment; forgot the years to come, with their probable tortures and tests. Under the black mask her cheeks flamed into color; her eyes glowed. Impulsively she caught at her companion's hand.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she whispered. "You don't know how glad I am that I came!"

"Ah, Mrs. Creagh, it *is* you, isn't it? Even masks can't always mask one, when one happens to be the most distinguished figure in the room."

Betty shrank back, the color ebbing from her cheeks.

"Ah, Mr. Armstrong, we all know you and your flattery," returned a graciously patronizing voice from under an enormous purple domino.

"How do you do, Drucilla?" It was Miss Allardyce who was speaking. Mrs.

Creagh reached out a fat hand and seized her.

"So glad to see you, Dahlia! *Such* a crowd! I don't see how one is ever to get through it. Dahlia"—in a sepulchral aside—"are you, in spite of my warning, chaperoning that poor, misguided creature——"

"Hush!" whispered Miss Allardyce, in dismay. "How charitable you sometimes are, Drucilla! The dear girl is a veritable angel, if ever there was one.

"Angel!" sniffed Mrs. Creagh, in an awful tone. "I don't know what the world is coming to, Dahlia! Why, do you know——"

"Well, if I don't, and incidentally the whole roomful, it won't be your fault," snapped Dahlia irritably, "if you persist in yelling like that. Besides"—in a small, stricken gasp—"this little nun at my back is Mrs. Victor Carnastor. She's probably heard every word you've said."

"Oh!" muttered the aggrieved lady, somewhat chastened. "I had no idea she'd come like that. I expected some outlandish get-up in Joseph's-coat colors, with all the family jewels dangling about her like heathen ornaments and scattered through that mop of red hair. Poor Victor! It's just as I've said all along——"

"Betty," implored Miss Allardyce, in despair, "will you excuse me for a moment? Sit here. I feel rather—queer. I believe my hair is coming down. I'm going to run up to the dressing room."

She gave the still muttering Mrs. Creagh's hand a meaning squeeze as she passed, and that lady, her purple skirts waving majestically, marched with unexpected obedience in the wake of the agonized Madame Bonaparte, who led her into a little palm-filled boudoir off the main drawing-room.

"Sit down, Drucilla, and for goodness' sake have your say out! That child pretended not to hear, but I'm morally certain she did—and I wouldn't wound a stableboy in such a fashion. It's brutal and unnecessary."

Miss Allardyce had a tongue of her own, and she used it freely upon occasion.

When they rejoined the others, Betty was nowhere to be found. In dismay the chaperon scurried toward the dancers.

"I'm perfectly distracted!" she admitted wildly to herself. "If these people don't stop crowding——"

At this critical juncture she caught sight of a form she recognized, whirling merrily in the mazes of the dance. It was Betty—and with Mrs. Creagh's "Josie"! She gasped, and made her way back to the purple domino.

"Drucilla, she's dancing—and with Joseph!"

"*Joseph!*" shrieked Mrs. Creagh, rather more loudly than the exigencies of etiquette permitted. "There, I told you so! She's a bold, designing minx. Ten to one she took the dear, innocent child by the arm and marched him off, willy-nilly. I shall tell him, the *minute* the darling is released, that——"

At that moment the music stopped with a long-drawn wail, and the beloved Joseph sought his mother. He was a small, debonair young man with sandy hair—"dull gold," his mother called it—and a monocle held on by a new law of gravitation apparently, as it seemed to have no visible means of support, yet never fell off.

"Ah, here you are!" said this doting son, pausing before the purple expanse that represented his parent. "I could see you a mile off, mater. I believe you're the fattest woman in the room."

This graceful tribute passed unheeded.

"My love," said Mrs. Creagh majestically, "may I speak to you for a moment?"

"Yes, if you'll be sure to make it

a moment. I'm down for the next dance."

"With whom, my dear?"

"The jolliest girl I've met in ages. I don't know who she is, but I'll be on hand when the unmasking takes place, you can wager! She's just my style, and I'm dead certain it'll be love at first sight when she unmasks. Oh, I'm hard hit—honest, mater. I want you to meet her. She's dressed as a nun, but I'll give you my word of honor she isn't a bit nunlike. She's guessed at the private histories of half the people in the room—and they're all masked, too. She's as keen-witted as a man."

"My dear Joseph—my *son*—do you know who that woman is?" asked his mother, in the awful tone of one presiding at a judgment seat. "She's that poor creature Victor Carnastor has married."

The genial Joseph stared, then emitted a long, low whistle.

"Aw, by Jove!" he remarked at last. "Well, anyway, she's a peach. Ten to one the stories about her are fabrications out of whole cloth. I'll stick to her." And with this loyal avowal, he turned back to the enchantress.

For the rest of the evening, Mrs. Creagh sat gloomily in her corner. Miss Allardyce, having done all that lay in her power to coax the outraged lady into a merrier mood, at last gave it up and joined the dancers.

"I must say," she remarked jauntily, meeting Betty later—that young lady having danced without intermission since her first round with the smitten Joseph—"you don't strike me as being especially in need of a chaperon. I hope you cherished no foolish fears about being a wallflower? You've already turned the head of Drucilla Creagh's little son."

Betty flung her an airy, taunting laugh.

"I'm enjoying myself; don't interrupt me. One can do lots of things under cover of a mask that one couldn't do otherwise." She caught Miss Allardyce's hand with sudden anxiety. "Mr. Armstrong said something about unmasking promptly at the stroke of twelve."

"It's the usual hour, of course," and away whirled the giddy coquette of seventy, as merry-hearted and light on her toes as she had been thirty years before.

The dancing waxed fast and furious as the hour for unmasking drew near; the fun was at its height. Under cover of her mask many an otherwise model dame grew coquettish and flirted as systematically as if there were nothing else in life worth while. Tongue-tied gentlemen found themselves emboldened to utter flowery nothings in amorous tones. Devoted couples going down to supper in a high state of jollity returned in a still higher state, owing to the imbibing of too much champagne. The young blood that is peaceable enough under ordinary conditions is stirred and goaded under the spur of music and laughter, wine and mask.

Five minutes to twelve.

Miss Allardyce was roused by a hasty touch on her arm.

"What is it, Betty dear?"

"I feel—ill," uttered a faint voice. "I'm afraid I'm going to swoon. Do you mind if I leave at once?"

"Why, darling, how terrible! The fun is just about to begin—the unmasking is always the best part of it all. Can't you wait until after——"

"No—I'm really too ill to stay. But I haven't the heart to take you away while you're enjoying yourself so much. If you're sure you won't need Yvonne, mayn't I take her and go home? I'll go quite as safely without you as with you."

"But—Victor?"

"He won't mind your staying. I'll be careful not to alarm him."

"A pretty sort of chaperon he'd think

me!" protested Madame Dahlia feebly, her pleasure-loving heart rebelling at thought of returning home at this early hour. "How horrid of you to miss the unmasking by getting yourself ill like this! Perhaps, dear, you tired yourself dancing, and the faintness will pass. Suppose you go somewhere and rest for a little while."

Mrs. Carnastor met this suggestion plaintively. "Are you going to argue the matter all night, dear lady? You know"—playing her trump card—"I'm not accustomed to late hours."

"Well, dear, run along. But, mind, if I get a lecture from Victor——"

"You won't. I'll see to that. Tell them, if any one asks, that I became ill and you sent me home."

Betty departed, her friend distractedly plying her with wraps and smelling salts and cautioning the maid to take good care of her.

"Go straight to bed, dear," she commanded. "And have Céleste get you a hot drink. She'll be sitting up for you."

Outside of the hot ballroom, the cool air of night on her flushed face, Betty Carnastor impatiently tore away her mask and dropped it by the roadside. Leaning back in the carriage, she looked long at the tranquil stars.

"What a life!" she sighed brokenly, scarcely above her breath. "Always deceit and subterfuge—never anything open and aboveboard."

Nevertheless, glancing back once at the squire's brilliant windows, she found herself reflecting gratefully that behind them almost the whole of Panberry was safely engaged for hours.

When the Hall was reached, she went at once to her bedroom, dismissing Yvonne rather sharply when that worthy damsel insisted upon seeing her comfortably to bed. Left alone, she tore off the nun's robes with feverish haste, hurrying into a dark gown of some clumsy, coarse weave unusual in a lady's wardrobe; and, thrusting her hair into a severe twist, she crowned it with a plain black turban that looked like a respectable housemaid's "Sunday" hat. It was an article that rarely saw the light, being at most times under lock and key, along with the coarse gray gown. A thick veil pinned about her head completed this simple but thorough disguise. She looked wholly unlike the sedate young nun of a moment ago; still less like the lithe, vivid mistress of Boswell. Now, she was merely a quiet and law-abiding house servant attending to affairs of her own.

Stepping softly, she crossed the hall. At her husband's door she paused. All was silent within.

"Ah, the harmless opiate your dear little wife dropped into your wine is doing its work well," she thought. "The coast is clear."

Slipping noiselessly down a rear staircase, she groped her way across the great, old-fashioned kitchen. A side door opened directly upon the kitchen garden, and as easily and stealthily as a skilled housebreaker, she drew the bolt and let herself out into the night. The sleepy footman who had been ordered to sit up for them, and who now awaited Miss Allardyce, dozed in the front hall. He heard nothing.

Betty often assured herself that she did not know the meaning of fear, but to-night, as she crept out into the darkness, the breathless stillness of midnight fell around her like a visible, unfriendly presence, and she shuddered and looked behind her as if fearful of ghostly followers.

Her way led her along meadow paths and through wooded uplands, where the trees waved like wraiths in the light wind and the moonlight fell frostily over everything. She crossed the little clearing before the stone walls of Panberry Prison, and knocked softly twice on the iron gates. They swung open instantly, and she crept cautiously inside.

"Is that you, Rose?" whispered a

voice from the shadows. "I was terribly afraid you wouldn't come."

CHAPTER VI.

Driving sleepily homeward in the early morning hours, feeling for the moment the burden of her years, Miss Allardyce bethought herself suddenly of Betty.

"I wonder what Victor will think of me. But she really insisted on my remaining. I wish she hadn't."

The sleepy footman opened the door. She went up the stairs with dragging footsteps. Passing Carnastor's door, she heard a sound.

"Betty!" called an eager voice.

She paused. "It isn't Betty," she faltered.

"Oh, it is you, Dahlia? I hope Betty isn't very tired?"

Miss Allardyce made no answer. Instead, she scurried through the halls into Mrs. Carnastor's rooms. A door was ajar, and she entered very softly, without knocking. In her dressing gown, her hair unbound and tumbled heavily about her, Betty lay across her bed, sleeping soundly, her breath lifting her young breast rhythmically and stirring the loosened hair. One slim, tapering leg in its silk stocking showed under the tumbled coverlet that outlined the lithe body seductively.

"The sweet baby!" thought the guest compassionately. "How can they say such fearful things of her? She's so unselfish. Now, last night, for instance. She wouldn't let me come home with her because she thought it would spoil the evening for me, and she feared to alarm her husband by coming home ill, so she did not let him know. I'll go down and speak to Victor at once."

And go she did, despite her weariness. She found that gentleman awake, and a bit puzzled.

"I slept the night through like a near relative of the Seven Sleepers," he confided to her. "I can't account for it; as a rule I'm awake half the night."

Miss Allardyce plunged at once into explanation:

"Dear Victor, Betty had the loveliest time imaginable—danced every dance, and without a doubt would have been one of the belles of the ball at the unmasking. But shortly before twelve she complained of feeling ill, and insisted on being driven home. She refused—absolutely refused—to allow me to accompany her, though I insisted. My maid came with her, and Yvonne is quite trustworthy. I told her to see that dear Betty was properly put to bed. I've just come from her room—she's sleeping like an infant."

Mr. Carnastor was distressed. "If she was really ill, you should have come home with her," he observed pointedly. "Poor little girl! Of course, she's entirely unaccustomed to the excitement of late hours and strenuous dancing."

"And unhealthy suppers. That lobster Newburg was positively vicious. I wonder," she added thoughtfully, "where she learned to dance. She dances like a Mexican—or a Pole. It's wonderful to watch her."

Betty's husband looked puzzled for a moment.

"I suppose," he confessed, after a pause, "that her mother taught her. That lady was a professional dancer. You may as well know the truth, Dahlia."

"Tell me about her," entreated his hearer, in a low, sympathetic voice. "I've your interest at heart so much that I think I've a right to know. I've been patient. We're very old friends, aren't we?"

"There's very little to tell. A year ago I went with a few friends on a shooting expedition in Canada—the real 'backwoods' country. An attack of this infernal rheumatism came on suddenly, and they were forced to leave me behind. They were compelled to go, you

know—business, family interests, other engagements called. Well, we set about finding a place where I could stay until the attack passed. At last Rayner discovered a clean little cottage in the very heart of the forest, so to speak. Monsieur and Madam Pardy—two old French people—lived there alone. That is, we supposed they were alone. They agreed to take me in and care for me until I was able to travel back to town. I fared very well, too, I must admit. Two nicer old people I never knew.

"One day a young woman came into my room with something sent by madame. It was Betty Donohue"—wincing ever so slightly at the name—"and I soon learned her history, which was a simple enough thing. She had been placed by her ne'er-do-well father in care of these two old people, but of the father they had lost all trace. The girl was so pure and gentle, so honest and lovable, so simple-hearted and yet so brilliant in mind in spite of her poverty and ignorance of life, that I was attracted to her at once.

"In the days that followed she helped the old man and his wife care for me; and perhaps my convalescence was not so rapid as it might have been under different circumstances. At any rate, when I left Monsieur Pardy, I took Betty with me—as my wife."

There was a silence. Dahlia Allardyce was revolving many things in her own mind; she did not wonder what was going on in his, until she glanced up and saw the illumination upon the old face.

"I have never regretted it. I love her, Dahlia."

She answered, rather faintly:

"Wasn't it a bit reckless, Victor?"

He shook his head. "It made me a happy man. I had been wretchedly lonely since dear Alice left me. And you may judge for yourself whether Betty is not a wife for whom any man might thank Heaven, fasting, on his knees."

"She is—she is, indeed," said the friend of his youth slowly. "I was prepared to be prejudiced, Victor, but the dear child has quite disarmed me. She's not merely charming and sweet-tempered—she's brilliant and talented. A more superb pianist I never heard."

Carnastor nodded, pleased with this warm praise of his darling.

"You're quite right. And she's a most lovely and dutiful wife. I suppose, however, you've observed that there's a spice of deviltry in Betty—she's not, thank Heaven, that most gruesome thing, an overserious woman, though I don't think one could call her frivolous. Occasionally a bit of her old life is reflected in speech and manner, but the dear child has the most absolutely natural refinement of spirit of any one I ever knew. It's wonderful how she has kept that crystalline purity of mind and heart through such trying years as she has known."

The lady had noticed the "spice of deviltry" so airily alluded to, but she did not think it worth while to enlarge upon the extent to which her observation had gone. In the matter of Joseph, for instance.

"Dear, dear boy," she purred presently, "you won't mind, will you, if I ask you something?"

"That depends," returned the "boy," with some caution. "If it concerns those ridiculous rumors Drucilla Creagh has set going about my little girl, I decline to discuss the matter."

"But that's precisely what I wanted to ask about. I wondered—you'll forgive me, of course?—if they had the least bit of foundation."

"I can't say, not knowing the nature of the rumors."

"Then perhaps you'll allow me to repeat some of them, since 'forewarned is forearmed,' you know. Now, has Betty a—a *criminal* father?"

Victor Carnastor laughed rather amusedly.

"What a tone, Dahlia! Yes, she has."

"Victor!"

"Oh, it's quite true. At this moment he is probably languishing somewhere in jail."

"*Ciel!*"

"You see, she comes from what we call 'the criminal classes.' Her mother," continued Betty's spouse, now beginning rather to enjoy himself, "was a second-rate actress and dancer, of not particularly savory reputation, I fancy, whose 'hit' was made at cheap theaters in Oriental snake dances, clad probably in little else but the snakes. She——"

A smothered gasp from the lady in Josephine's regalia.

"Vic——"

"She's now dead, but the father is presumably alive, no information to the contrary having been received. Betty seems to have had an affection for him, and followed him about until he deserted her."

A mournful silence ensued after this revelation. The deepening light of morning fell without pity upon Dahlia Allardyce's gaudy ball dress and golden plumes. Last night they had looked festive; in this gray light they were almost tawdry. The withered, kindly face, with its heavily rouged cheeks, filled the old man with a vague pity. Once she had loved him—and no man ever wholly forgets a woman who has wrung her heart dry for him and held it up for his eyes to behold, in that terrible abandonment known only to a woman madly in love. Had she forgotten, he wondered.

"You didn't know all this when you married her?" she asked.

"No—oh, no! But it wouldn't have made any difference. The roots of the whitest lilies are nourished in mud. Betty herself is an angel."

"How did you find out?"

"She told me. Only the other day she read me portions from an old diary of hers from which I inferred much. Deuced interesting it was, too."

Miss Allardyce pondered.

"Did it ever occur to you that the average woman would carefully conceal such things from the man who loved her? Why should she——"

"Dahlia, the child hasn't an ounce of concealment in her whole body. She's frankness itself. Of course, it wasn't necessary to tell me, but I suppose she thought I ought to know."

"Then why didn't she tell you before you married her?"

"I tell you," said Mr. Carnastor impatiently, "it would have made no difference. I loved her; I would have married her 'if the whole world had spit fire in my face.' I knew she was of humble parentage. It was unnecessary to know the details of her past."

"But she might have *thought* it would make a difference. Her duty was to tell you then, and not afterward, if she felt called upon to make startling revelations. If all you have told me is true, Victor, I suppose the stories about her shooting and her reckless horsewomanship are true. It will probably be best to keep on the safe side of a woman with these accomplishments, though I suppose there's no particular disgrace attached to them." Her tone was rather bitter. "Some one said last night that she carries firearms concealed about her person——"

The master of Boswell fell back in his chair, laughing uproariously.

"You remember the story of the three black crows? Well, this is a revised version. Betty rides very well, I suppose. I've never seen her mounted, but she rides Bluebell a good deal, I think—she's very fond of the animal, and it is her special property. As for the story about the firearms, it's rank nonsense. It's the dividing line between truth and mere fabrication. Betty's not that sort of woman. If she were ad-

dicted to shooting, I'm sure I should have known it. Betty is not to blame for her early training, though I haven't a doubt it included various doubtful things. However, I think the handling of firearms was not among them."

Miss Allardyce shook off the sound of his cheerful laughter by putting an end to her early-morning visit. As she went impatiently toward the door, she paused, glancing back at him rather wistfully. Her face looked wan and old as a pink shaft from the rising sun struck across it.

"I'm going to my room, Victor. I'm tired—so tired. After I've slept off the effect of last night's dissipation, I'll talk with you again. I'm a little bewildered with all that you've told me, but, in spite of it, I'm quite sure of one thing—Betty is a fascinating woman."

Then she went away.

Hours afterward, not being able to sleep, she tossed restlessly out of bed and went to her hostess' room, hoping to obtain from that young woman the "sleeping powders" that are usually to be unearthed in a house where there is an invalid.

"I hope I'm not disturbing her," she thought, tapping lightly upon the door, which she instantly perceived was ajar.

She glanced boldly in, only to find that the pretty, conventional, rose-colored jungle was deserted. She crossed the floor and looked peevishly into the boudoir sitting room beyond. That, too, bore no trace of recent occupancy. Turning back, she paused for a moment at the big bow window at the end of the hall overlooking the stables and the driveway that curved backward to the fields. Some one was dashing away at an alarming pace from under the porte-cochère. It was Mistress Betty, in a wine-red habit and a smart riding hat. Never had she looked more like a young Diana, bubbling with vitality. She cast a hurried glance toward the guest's windows, behind which a placid old lady was supposed to be sleeping; then, with a word and a nod to the groom, dashed off to the wooded hills beyond Panberry.

"'She's very fond of Bluebell,'" quoted Miss Allardyce thoughtfully. "Even so. But this, my poor, deluded friend, isn't Bluebell—it's that black devil, Beelzebub, that not one woman in a thousand could possibly manage."

Wrapping her dressing gown about her, she marched back to her room with the air of a general about to marshal his forces.

"Yvonne," said she, opening the door of her dressing closet, where her maid sat mending a torn peignoir, "did Mrs. Carnastor seem very ill when she returned last night?"

"Not especially ill, ma'am, though she seemed somewhat upset."

"And you made her comfortable for the night?"

Yvonne lifted an apologetic face.

"She would not let me, ma'am. She said she wanted to be alone, and sent me away."

Miss Allardyce pondered. Then she rang for Céleste.

"Did you see your mistress when she returned last night?" she asked, when the girl appeared.

"No, madam. She particularly wanted me to go to bed and not sit up for her."

"Thank you," said Miss Allardyce. "That is all. No—wait! Go to your master's study and find out for me if Mrs. Carnastor is with him. Tell her I should like to see her."

Céleste hurried off, and returned shortly with the report:

"Mr. Carnastor says he has persuaded his wife to go for a little walk about the grounds. He thought the fresh air would benefit her. She is suffering from headache."

"That's all. You may go."

The lady from the city wrapped her dragons about her and subsided into the bedclothes.

"Out for a little walk—on Beelzebub! Just so. Headache? My dear Betty, you bear your infirmities with ease."

Miss Allardyce was vaguely uneasy, without being able to say exactly why.

CHAPTER VII.

The dinner gong sounded, echoing through the old, empty rooms that had once responded to the click of high-heeled shoes and teasing laughter, to sinuous music and cheerful conversation and all the manifestation of young life that it would never know again probably in the present owner's lifetime. In her room the visitor at Boswell, yielding to a perverse whim that was perhaps the outcome of that moment's self-revelation in the gray dawn, when she had read pity in Carnastor's unconscious glance, was putting on a plain black gown with white bands at throat and wrist, which gave her much the appearance of somebody's good, respectable housekeeper. She left off the marvelous puffs and curls she was wont to wear, waved her hair softly over one indispensable "roll," and caught it away from her face.

"There!" she remarked calmly to her reflection, while Yvonne stared and marveled. "I'm going to be exactly myself, for once in my life." She left the room, closing the door softly behind her.

"Oh, cruel fate!" she said lightly, beneath her breath, and trying to laugh. "To feel yourself of a sudden shut out from everything—to be an old, haggard frump, and unable to help yourself; to sit down at dinner beside a young and beautiful woman and know that the man you once loved is making comparisons every time he lifts his eyes—— Ah, God!" came a fierce whisper, though strangling sobs tore at her throat. "The pity—*pity*—in his eyes to-day as he looked at the old woman in her silly masquerade, gaudy plumes nodding in her purchased hair, and the enamel crackling on her withered old face as she tried to laugh! That's harder to bear than anything—his pity! Oh, to be young and fair again—with no thought of the years to come—the years of rouge and enamel and petty deceits that must come!" She struck her hand fiercely against the wall. "I'm going home!" she sobbed tearlessly. "I'm out of place here—I shouldn't have come. And I haven't any especial taste for Irish guttersnipes, anyway. They revert to the type, sooner or later."

Having relieved herself of this bitter and unwarranted remark, she began to upbraid herself:

"You're a bad, low woman, Madame Dahlia, or you'd be incapable of a thought like that. I'm jealous, that's all—jealous of her youth and effortless magnetism. I'm sorry I said *that*. She's no ordinary woman, at any rate."

The master of the house was suffering from a fresh attack of gout to-night, and consequently did not appear at table. This left Miss Allardyce alone with the young woman who had been much in her thoughts all day. Betty did not appear at once; when she came, it was with a rush. Two big dogs, lounging in the hall, sprang up and followed the dancing figure, and she talked to them softly as she swept them along. She was in a white dinner gown that showed her young throat and arms; her wind-blown hair had been caught up with a scarlet ribbon; her lips and cheeks were aglow.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting! Have you just waked?" cried Mrs. Carnastor gayly, after a glance of undeniable amazement at the unusual toilet of her guest. "Yvonne said you were sleeping when I went to inquire after you, after I came home."

"From your little walk about the

grounds?" inquired Miss Allardyce sweetly. "I hope your headache is quite well, dearest."

Betty shot a swift, understanding glance at her from beneath her lashes.

"Ah, yes, the open air was so beneficial that I hadn't a headache ten minutes after getting out. And I really didn't mean to say that I thought you slept the entire day, for I saw you on the terrace at tea time, talking with Victor. But, after such a fatiguing night, one requires a good deal of sleep to put one right again, don't you think? You know I'm unaccustomed to dancing."

"Yes," agreed Miss Allardyce dryly. "I should suppose as much, judging from your evident ignorance of it. Only a short while ago I was speaking of your dancing to your husband. Where did you learn to dance like that?"

Mrs. Carnastor hesitated. "Oh, I suppose it's another of those 'natural gifts' the footman is fond of talking about," she said, with an indifferent shrug. "Have an ice, Miss Allardyce? They're genuinely refreshing."

Victor Carnastor's old friend watched this cool young woman consume her food with the frankness of a vigorous appetite.

"You're sure you've entirely recovered from your indisposition of last night?" she asked, with a sharp glance. "You show no traces of it to-day. I, for my part, am quite fagged out."

"I came home at twelve, you at half past three in the morning," she was reminded.

"But you danced—*how* you danced! What a pity you missed the unmasking! It was loads of fun. Drucilla Creagh's 'Josie' was quite disconsolate when he couldn't find you."

Betty laughed cruelly, showing her white teeth.

"The poor Joseph! And 'the duchess'?"

Miss Allardyce assumed a confidential air. "So you *did* hear what she said? I feared as much. When her darling Josie avowed wildly—he was a bit full of champagne at the time, I'll admit—that you were the *bulliest* little woman he had ever met and he'd hunt you up if it took him a lifetime, his mother was almost prostrated. You gave her a bad hour, my dear."

"That's why I danced with him," confessed Mrs. Carnastor sweetly.

"You mean——"

"I mean that she hates me, and that it's fun to worry her."

"I wish you'd be careful, my dear—very careful. Drucilla Creagh is not to be tampered with," warned Miss Allardyce "If you knew the rumors that have reached her ears——"

"Tell me about them."

The older woman hesitated, then hurried on: "I'll only mention one thing, for which you alone are responsible, if it's true. Do you go off into the woods with dogs and a gun—like a *man?* Do you actually shoot—*shoot*, Betty?"

At this Mrs. Carnastor threw up her head with a shriek of delighted laughter.

"Oh, do forgive me!" she cried at last. "But you did look so dreadfully in earnest, and so—so *horrified*. Shoot? Why, of course I can! Come with me to-morrow afternoon, and we'll have target practice."

"I? Never, while I'm above ground! I *hate* guns, and—I'm afraid of them." Presently she exploded with a new alarm. "You don't *kill* things, Betty?"

"Why, yes. I killed a wolf once when I was twelve years old. Father and I were in the Canadian mountains. I bagged more game in our hunting trips than some of the men."

Madame Dahlia dropped her spoon, aghast. Her face was quite colorless. "He—your father—taught you these things—allowed you to go hunting with rough men——"

"Oh, yes, and I'm awfully glad he did. The things he taught me have

since stood me in good stead. I often carried a revolver; it was a loyal and silent friend at times when it would have been dangerous to ask my way."

Poor Dahlia Allardyce! She stared at this astounding young woman as if she were beholding an apparition. If her hostess had leveled a couple of double-barreled shotguns at her and ordered her to throw up her hands, the distressed lady would have been no more astonished than she already was. She was alone in the big dining room with this woman who sat calmly talking of killing wolves and bagging game——

Suddenly meeting the appealing eyes fastened upon her, Mrs. Carnastor, who had been inwardly enjoying the poor lady's discomfiture, softened toward her.

"The dear soul!" she thought. "What a gulf lies between my life and hers! My experiences have been very real, but I'm afraid I could never, never make her understand. But she wants to be my friend; she has made up her mind to stick to me, because I'm Victor's wife. I need a friend, Heaven knows."

A sudden, almost strangling desire for confession seized her; a longing to know how a fragment of the truth would affect this butterfly of that other life that would forever be remote from hers.

"Dear Miss Allardyce, the stories are probably true—some of them, at least. I've never heard them all. My father was a professional thief and gambler—what you people scathingly call a 'criminal.' I saw always the seamy side of things. My life was not an easy one, but I loved just to be alive, and I was philosophical. I lived in the now. I was knocked from pillar to post, hobnobbing with gamblers, thieves, forgers, and murderers from my cradle up—the lowest stratum of society, I guess you'd call it. But, after all, training, or lack of it, isn't everything. You have men—and women, too, for the matter of that—in *your* circle who 'go to the dogs,' who drink and gamble and steal and cut one another's throats. I was brought up with a rifle at close call always; I went to sleep prepared to wake to flight or battle; I woke wondering what new fear and excitement the day would bring.

"I learned to manage horses on a Texan ranch where my father was for a time overseer. But I'm no wild, lawless, woolly-West cowgirl, am I? Such as you associate with cheap melodrama? I've seen a good bit of life, it's true—all sides of it—but I'm not sorry for that. Life has never yet bored me, as it would have done—oh, most fearfully!—if I'd been born in your class."

Miss Allardyce's sigh was more like a groan. "My dear, indeed you do seem to me like a lady. When one considers everything, it's wonderful that you should. But why not tell Victor everything, since you've told him so much, and let him know that you can never give up dogs and horses and—*guns?*" She smiled, like April, through a mist.

"Victor does so hate a 'horsy' woman. I—I'll let him know some day. Perhaps he'll accidentally see me on Beelzebub, let us say. Oh, if you only knew what a temptation that beast is! He's absolutely vicious; he bit Thompson terribly one day. I wonder why Victor keeps him?"

"Did he never tell you? Beelzebub belonged to his son—his only child—who was killed in the Boer War."

"Oh!" The girl's face paled. "I knew about the son and his tragic fate, but I never knew that Beelzebub belonged to him. The poor boy!" Her eyes brooded and became almost maternally soft, for a brief instant.

"He was a very fine fellow, the young son. If his mother had lived, she would have been very proud of him. It was sad—his death. But it's always like that in life—something is wanting; our

souls go on begging for completeness in vain," sighed the older woman.

For a long time Betty sat lost in thought; her eyes were bent upon the brown, ringless hands that lay clasped together on the white tablecloth. The flame-colored ribbon in her hair gave her the look of some bright, scarlet-topped bird—a wild thing of the forest.

"I don't wish to annoy my husband," she said at last, in a low voice. "Of course, sooner or later, he will find out about my riding Beelzebub. I don't know that I shall do it again."

"I can't say that I blame you, child. You must fill your days somehow. Let me take you home with me and introduce you to my friends. I——"

The listener shrank visibly. "No, no—oh, no! I couldn't bear a life like that! To be pouring tea and smirking at insipid people when I wanted to be off in the hills with my dogs, or in a rowboat on angry waters, or in a storm, with the wind and rain in my face—— Even danger and fear rather than that driveling existence that is all your class knows of life! Life, that is as deep and wonderful as God—— Oh, how can you bear it? Always the same——"

"My *dear* child," said the exasperated visitor, "what is it that you want?"

"I don't know," said Betty drearily. "I think—— Oh, I want——" She broke off with a gesture of passion, and sat staring into the darkness outside the warm, bright room.

Watching her, the woman of seventy felt an odd tug of pity.

"When I was your age," she reminisced, "I never thought of serious or saddening things. Life was a chalice of sparkling wine, and the rim touched my eager lips. Now the wine has been drained, and nothing is left but the memory of its sweetness. But I shall always remember."

They stood facing each other across the sparkling table.

"I, too," said Betty, "have drained the glass. And I shall always remember—not the golden wine, but the black dregs."

That night Dahlia Allardyce, in her dragon dressing gown, added this clause to her ordinarily conventional prayers:

"Dear God, please take care of her, and show her what is right. I think, down in the depths of that strange heart of hers, she wants to be good."

Not until she was comfortably ensconced in bed, with the dim and dreaming rose glow of the night lamp falling softly over the pleasant room, did the thought strike her that it would not have been inappropriate to have prayed also for Victor.

CHAPTER VIII.

With one of the swift rallies to health that seemed largely perverseness, at times, to his friends and his servants, Mr. Carnastor insisted on being wheeled in to breakfast, sending a message to the astonished guest that it was his desire to see her at that particular function.

"You see, *I'm* able to come down," he supplemented cheerfully, as she appeared with gloomy aspect, her morning negligee flying rather spitefully about her as she plumped into her seat. "It gives me joy to breakfast in the bosom of my family, so to speak."

"Humph!" she commented, refusing to be consoled even by the sunshiny face of Mrs. Carnastor, who was smiling at her across the coffee urn. "You know I'm never really awake before twelve. I always breakfast in my bed, and if I'm routed out, I merely go about walking in my sleep all day."

"Well, you won't this morning," he observed, laughing. "We have plans to keep you awake all day."

"I should like to know what new mischief you're up to now, Mistress Betty,"

she murmured suspiciously, as she received her cup.

"And why 'Mistress Betty'?" was the smiling reply. "I plead not guilty. The present plan is Victor's."

Across the little table Carnastor regarded his wife with a smile.

"I suppose I may as well reveal my simple little plan. You see, Dahlia, most of the visitors to Panberry find a visit to the prison very entertaining. I asked Betty to drive you over this morning."

A swift shade, which might have been the passing of a shadow from the sun, drifted over the girl's face—and was gone.

"Oh, a *jail!*" cried Miss Allardyce, clapping her hands girlishly. "How lovely! I've a penchant for ghastliness, and if anybody ever gets hung here, Victor, you may count on me."

Her tone was light, but as she spoke she caught sight of Betty's face. The girl looked shocked and pained, and even her lips had lost color.

"I'm a frivolous idiot, dear," declared the other woman contritely. "I believe I'd make foolish remarks at my own funeral, if I knew what was going on. But then I've had so little tragedy in my life. I've seen always the comedy—the sunny side of things."

"And I the seamy side," said Betty, half to herself.

Carnastor looked at her with a world of tenderness in his eyes.

"Yes, darling, but that's all ended. You're to be sheltered hereafter; it's the business of my life to make you a happy woman."

The old jealous torment awoke and stirred for a moment in the breast of his boyhood sweetheart, but she thrust it resolutely back. As for Betty, she merely smiled, a trifle wistfully, perhaps rather scornfully; so quickly did the smile fade one could not say.

"I should like Briggs to bring the carriage round in half an hour, if you don't mind," Carnastor went on. "The prison chaplain—a fine man he is, too, by the way—is rather a friend of mine. Ask for him, Betty. He'll be glad to show you over the place. I think you'll quite enjoy the experience, Dahlia."

"I enjoy anything I don't see too much of," she returned truthfully, as she and Betty left the table. "That seems scarcely a courteous thing to say, dear," she added, as the two went up the stairs together, "but it's the secret of congeniality. If married women would avoid their husbands as they do the plague, the creatures would all adore their wives and follow at their heels like pet dogs. On the contrary, see what fools women make of themselves—turning their silly selves into doormats for matter-of-fact men!"

"You evidently have a grievance," said Betty, smiling. "Of what is this apropos, dear lady?"

This noncommittal query brought a sharp glance from the dear lady.

"There's no use trying to bring out your views on husbands, my love," thought she, "but never mind. Some day that dormant Vesuvius that passes for your heart will stir in its sleep—and awake. Then God pity you and other women of your kind, who walk so lightly along the edge of the precipice! You're anything but ignorant of most things, my dear; but you have never loved any one."

The obsequious Briggs announced that the carriage waited, and the sartorial vanity of Dahlia Allardyce returned at a leap.

"I want to look picturesque, Betty, and yet suitably attired for a prison visit. What shall I wear?"

"Of course, you'll look lovely in anything," cooed Betty, "but I should so like to see you in that lovely yellow gown of Doucet's, and the white-and-yellow hat."

"Oh, my dear!" came the feeble protest. "I shall look entirely too gay, I fear, for such an occasion; and, besides,

if I wear that particular gown, I shall have to put on all my war paint and feathers to be in keeping."

This Mistress Betty knew; and she longed to present the finished apparition —rouge, puffs, creaking stays, and yellow gown combined—before the astonished eyes of good old Doctor Wilbert, whose pet horror was a worldly woman.

"Tell the carriage to wait," she commanded. "Now, dear lady, go find Yvonne and make yourself beautiful. Even jailbirds appreciate a bit of color."

Off went the flattered lady with a flurry of silken skirts. Mrs. Carnastor, shaking with noiseless laughter, sped to her room, closed the door behind her, and caught up gloves, coat, and a riding hat. She did not even glance at the mirrored walls as she pinned her hat hastily in place. Then she stood with clenched hands and brows drawn together sharply, apparently lost in unhappy thought, until Miss Allardyce appeared—a marvel of satin and lace and yellow, high-heeled shoes, the whole crowned with a Paris hat dripping yellow roses; verily a most bewildering *tout ensemble* for a morning visit anywhere, not to mention a jail.

At once Betty broke into smiles. "Oh, how lovely!" she cried softly. "What a poem of a gown!"

"Not that *you* care about such 'poems,'" retorted the yellow lady, staring at her simply clad hostess. "Why did you have me attire myself like this when you snatch a hat and rush off in a morning gown and coat?" The festive one was plainly annoyed.

"Dear lady, it's only for Victor that I dress up. Besides, I'm going to call upon some of the tenants after luncheon. They like me, and I'm glad to be of service to them. I often carry them food and clothes, and things they need—not out of any especially Christian impulse, but because it seems wrong and unjust for us to have so much and they so little."

The yellow lady said no more, but meekly followed Betty to the carriage. If this young woman was an iconoclast, with a leaning toward the equalizing of the classes, there was perhaps also in her the making of an anarchist, and from anarchy to bombs and bloodshed was but a step. Naturally one preferred to die quietly in one's bed and not be blown to infinitesimal fragments without warning.

"After all," she remarked to herself, "these people of low birth and breeding are never quite safe."

But one glance at the mocking, magnetic face under the curve of the riding hat gave her a feeling of shame at her unjust thought.

"You're always thoughtful of others, my dear," she said, rousing. "Now, I am so abominably selfish. I suppose if Victor demanded that you breakfast at four every morning, with kerosene lamps for light, you'd do it."

"But—of course."

"Well, if that's true," said the older woman to herself, "and you'd really do it of your own free will and for no reason except to gratify an old man's whim, I wonder what you *would* be capable of doing for a man you loved! Haven't you changed a bit since the old days?" she asked the girl. "Haven't Baswell Hall and your husband's wealth developed any luxurious tendencies?"

"I don't know. I suppose I like the comfort of it." There was a thoughtful pause. "It's quiet and peaceful enough. And Victor is very good."

"I can't imagine the *quiet* of any place being an inducement," cried Dahlia Allardyce, with her shrill, high laugh.

In her seat Mrs. Carnastor turned and looked at her. The other woman quailed before the expression of the blue, lonely eyes.

"No, you couldn't," said Betty quietly. "That's quite true. But perhaps under some circumstances you

would crave no other boon than quiet—just to be let alone——" She threw up her head with a sudden, impatient gesture. "There's the prison!" she said shortly.

Miss Allardyce looked, then put up her lorgnette with a gasp.

"Dear me, love, the place is positively *romantic* looking!" she affirmed. "The architecture is superb. And what marvelous trees! Why, Betty, I didn't know criminals were ever so pleasantly situated."

"They're 'on the inside, looking out.'" Mrs. Carnastor smiled with a grim sense of her own humor.

"How terribly tragic those great iron gates look, dearest!" glancing back with a little, affected shudder to where the powerful gates showed black in the sunlight. "And those horrible long bars across the windows. After all, I suppose it *is* hard for any one to be shut away from the life of the world and communion with his fellows."

The yellow lady chattered cheerfully until they had passed inside the great stone building, crouched like a sullen beast in its jungle of poplars, but when the gloom of the hallway closed around them, a little of her ready self-assurance failed.

The obliging chaplain, venerable and stern as a monk of bygone ages, was sent for, and when he came, he gave the vision of white and yellow a glance that—as she afterward affirmed—penetrated to her marrow and made her seem of a sudden merely an old, sinful woman, girded upon with the senseless trappings of "this present world, which fadeth."

Outside black clouds had crept swiftly over the face of the sun, and a summer rain had begun to fall—not irresolutely or lightly, as it often does, but in a steady downpour. But inside the prison walls the world out yonder seemed very far away, and its weather a matter of small moment.

Miss Allardyce glanced up the long, dim corridor with a dismal smile. "I can quite conceive of a man's embracing respectability in behalf of freedom after a sojourn here."

But Mrs. Carnastor shook her head. "It has a certain large, impersonal calmness about it that I like," she said. "It stands for justice and the protection of the law. It is not to be argued away or outwitted or circumvented by anarchy. It's one of the institutions that has endured, and shall endure."

"Anyway, I'm glad I'm on the outside," observed the lady of the roses, with a little, forced laugh. That sentiment of Betty's—wasn't it rather odd for the daughter of a jailbird?

"Just the same," added Betty calmly, and in a voice so low that only the woman near her could hear, "that wouldn't prevent my trying to escape if I had been locked in here, or in aiding in the escape of any one dear to me. The desires of the individual are at times mightier than the law. But the law must go on with its enforcements."

There was a soft rustle of skirts over the stone floor. Mrs. Carnastor, leaving her companion to the mercy of the chaplain, had crossed to the barred window at the end of the long passage, and stood there looking out, with eyes grown suddenly very tired and sad, upon the world of darkening skies and lashing rain.

A voice came from the end of the hallway. Contrary to the tenets of rule and courtesy, the chaplain was explaining to the wide-eyed Miss Allardyce some of his "cases."

"This cell? Old Adam Traynam—burglar. Eighty-nine years old, and the worst of the lot. Swears like a trooper and threatens anarchy—one foot in the grave, too."

Betty shivered a little, as with cold, and laid her face against the pitiless iron that surrounded the window.

"To be shut away from the life of

the world," she repeated Miss Allardyce's words passionately, "and communion with one's fellows! Yes, more than that—to be so fettered by heredity and evil inclinations that the future holds no more than the past. To go from the iron gates back to the old life, forbidden of man and God, and denounced by the priests and Pharisees—that is the fate of most of them. Poor, 'dumb, driven cattle'! Sometimes I go back to the old theory of predestination. They seem born to be cursed and tracked by their fellow men, and, at the last, forgotten of God."

A little, shrill cry echoed down the passageway.

"*Betty!* Have you forsaken me? Do come on! We're going up this flight of indescribable stairs."

They passed up the narrow stairs together, the old chaplain as tireless and erect as an Indian, Miss Allardyce panting behind, Betty following with laggard footsteps.

They came into a hall similar to the one below, save that it was darker and narrower. The chaplain paused before one of the cells and signaled them to stop. The lashing rain sounded far away and indistinct, and the wind was broken by the intervening walls into a low, sobbing wail.

"Number Eighteen—Alaric Cathcart, reputed to be the black sheep of a once proud family, who has been convicted twice of forgery and innumerable times of open theft. Sad that loving parents must bear the grief occasioned by such sons!"

"Cathcart!" The lady in yellow looked up, with a sudden intake of breath. "Why, I knew something of that! It made a stir at the time. When he was first taken up for forgery, he was found to be innocent. Some woman he had known—a common, low person, I understand—confessed her guilt, and he was released—wasn't he?" The light of a struggling memory was in her eyes.

"Oh, yes, he was adjudged innocent—once. But soon afterward he was found guilty of a similar offense and put in prison. He served his term and was released, the result being that within the year he was convicted again—and of a similar crime. This time, too, he had been captured in the act of making off with a certain great lady's jewels. Oh, he's a thoroughgoing rogue. But his term in Panberry includes the next five years, so he'll have ample time to reflect upon his sins and repent of them before he goes out again into the world of men."

The chaplain's voice held the grave dignity of the ecclesiastic. In spite of the monotonous, low tones, their import had carried to No. 18. He lifted his eyes—blue and wide open and full of a cynical interest. Mrs. Carnastor suddenly drew nearer.

"He's young to waste so many years behind prison bars," Miss Allardyce protested. "Is there no chance of his release before the five years are ended?"

"None. But such men are safer in prison than out. I've talked with him often. He's a hopeless 'case' to deal with. The others are at times amenable, but this man seems wholly devoid of the moral sense. Truth, honesty, virtue, the good of his fellow men—these are to him empty and meaningless terms. I can't understand it; his parents were good, earnest, God-fearing souls."

White to the lips, Mrs. Carnastor heard him out. Then, with a swirling, defiant movement, she turned until she faced the occupant of No. 18. A flash like the meeting of sword blades passed from his eyes to hers. He made an impetuous movement.

"It's all very sad," said the chaplain's low, toneless voice as he crossed the corridor. "His people have quite given him up; they were forced to do it. They no longer communicate with him. I

think—hope—that there may yet be a chance for him, but——"

His voice drowsed on. The shimmering yellow figure followed close at his heels. Set against the somber dignity of the place, Miss Allardyce's Paris gown and rose-dripping hat looked merely tawdry; she was not insensible of her own incongruity.

Betty Carnastor, seeing the two busy with the record of No. 13, looked down into the eyes of the man behind the bars of No. 18. Something there was in her face that neither her husband nor Dahlia Allardyce could have recognized—an almost tigerish force, a determination so bitter that it scarred her features with the agony of unshed tears, and yet an agony very far removed from the weakness of tears. She was quivering from head to foot.

"*Courage!*" she said, so low that it might have been the whisper of the wind through the long corridor. Then she went swiftly across the floor to where Miss Allardyce, white under her rouge, was listening to an abbreviated account of No. 13's crime.

CHAPTER IX.

A fortnight later, coming in from a tramp across the hills, Mrs. Carnastor discovered her husband staring abstractedly at a letter the servant had just brought in. She sat down opposite him, a vital-looking figure in her walking frock of a silvery green that was like the first spring touch of color on the trees. Her flaming hair, frankly red in high light and bronze in shadow, showed under the brim of a modish hat.

"What is it, Victor? Anything concerning——" She broke off and scrutinized covertly the page turned toward her. "At least," she thought, "they've not brought in a letter of mine by mistake."

"Oh, no, my dear. It's from Herman Ogilvie. His father was a bosom friend of mine. They used to call us 'Damon and Pythias.' He died years ago. Most of the old crowd are gone. The dear old days——"

"And the son?" impatiently, as the old man fell into a reverie. He held out the letter.

"He writes to say that he's coming down to visit us for a while. We must ask our friends in and have something in his honor. What would you suggest? A small house party, now——"

Mrs. Carnastor jumped to her feet.

"What are you talking about?" she said, in a frightened, impetuous voice. "I won't allow it—do you hear? I hate guests! It's positively cruel of you to force upon me the presence of people I don't care about in the least. A *house party*, indeed! If you persist in this mad whim, I shall take to the woods and camp there until they go away."

Amazed and incredulous, the old man sat straight in his chair and listened. Never, never before had he heard his Betty speak like this.

"I didn't know, my dear, that you regarded as a 'mad whim' a man's desire to have his friends about him—to offer them the hospitality of his roof and the light of his fireside. I thought even the worst of men—and women—had somewhere a germ of that divine instinct that teaches one to share one's pleasures and the comfort of one's house with one's brethren." He spoke appealingly, meeting her angry eyes with the questioning glance of a child wounded where its confidence is deepest. "Why is it that you have such a horror of *people*, Betty? Since we came to Boswell, we've lived like hermits. Remember, my love, that as my wife, and the mistress of Boswell Hall, there are certain things demanded of you. One's social position——"

"Yes," acquiesced Betty rather bitterly. "One pays well for one's poor superiority over one's fellows in the

way of man-given titles and tainted money, doesn't one? However, I suppose you're right," she added, with a stern flash of justice. "When one is born to a position, it usually demands a certain amount of policy, whatever that position may be. Now tell me, Victor," with a sudden change of manner, as she dropped to the hassock at his feet, "are you going to have this abominable man here?"

"He's a very charming boy," faintly "And he's my dear old friend's son. He wants to come, and I very much desire to have him."

"But you won't persist in asking him to Boswell?"

He lifted his head with a touch of his youthful hauteur.

"I'm sorry if it displeases you, my dear child, but I shall certainly ask him. Don't be babyish and unreasonable. What possible grudge can you have against a man you never saw in your life? He certainly will not trouble you in the least, but when he comes, I beg that you will do your full duty as hostess."

There was an instant's silence. Across the easy insouciance of Mrs. Carnastor's face came swiftly a real fear. Her brows drew together sharply. It was as if comedy had swiftly donned a tragic mask. Presently she turned to put her arms caressingly about the old man's neck.

"Dear heart," she besought, "we need no guests, you and I. Aren't you happy with only Betty, that others are necessary? There are only you and I in all the world, Victor *mio*. Let's forget everything else, and be happy together, just we two."

Carnastor was touched; but a vague, disloyal suspicion, so shapeless that it did not take form, darted through his mind. He held her at arm's length and searched her face.

"You never knew Herman Ogilvie?" he asked.

Betty looked at him, then shook her head drearily. "No," she said, and somehow he knew that she spoke the truth.

He pondered. "You object, then, not so much to Herman, but to *any* guest?"

She nodded miserably.

"I—I don't know how to explain satisfactorily," she stammered at last, "but I hope you'll try to understand, and be patient with me. I——"

"You're a singular woman," said her husband. "If I didn't know you to be merely an innocent child, I should at times fail to understand you. Is it that you fear people may find out about your father? Why, love, that couldn't affect you *now*. Surely, then, you don't mean what you say—that you want no one but me. I'm flattered, of course, my darling—but your attitude is unnatural for one so young. Even in this case there are things a man owes his friends."

Swiftly a very madness of emotion seemed to seize upon Betty. She slid to her knees and lay with her face hidden against him. Her tight-locked lips gave forth no sound of the torrent that raged within her, but her hands twisted and untwisted as if some physical agony held her in its grip.

"Victor—Victor——" she said brokenly, "let me have my way in this! In all else I will obey you——"

Then Victor Carnastor with difficulty got to his feet. He was as nearly angry with Betty as he had ever been in his life.

"Get up this instant, my dear!" he commanded decisively—and he could be decisive on occasion. "You're acting like a spoiled child. I shall always be happy to accede to any reasonable request of yours, but this particular one is both foolish and unreasonable. I shall certainly write at once to ask Herman to Boswell for as long a time as he can possibly spare us."

He rang for Roberts with a sharp

tug at the bell that brought that gentleman in a hurry from the next room.

"Roberts, sit here and write a letter for me." And the obedient Roberts sat, and took down the cordial invitation with punctilious correctness. "Now take it yourself to Panberry and see that it catches the next mail."

When he had gone, there was a silence in the room. Mrs. Carnastor sat with her face averted. The little French clock ticked loudly, as if in affright. Painfully the moments dragged past.

Then Betty sprang up and laughed with the rippling mirth of a child.

"This is our first quarrel, isn't it?" she chirped, running to fling herself into the arms of the astonished old gentleman. You're awfully good-tempered, Victor—I've tried so long to find a vulnerable spot! I love you better than ever—indeed, I do. Don't you know a woman never really loves a man until he has proven to her that he's master? I'll be pleasant to the nice young man who's coming, for your sake, and to any other friends of yours. I was only teasing you, dear."

And the old man, gazing at her, could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. He gasped, started to speak, then sank back in a heap.

"My dear," he said, his arms around her and the flame of her hair blinding him, "if I were a younger man, I should probably find them entertaining, but at my age these sudden changes of yours are hard on the nervous system. I pray you, try to be more equable."

And Betty, lying in his arms, laughed happily.

But an hour afterward, when she had escaped to her room, could the masterful gentleman have seen her, his entire nervous system would no doubt have suffered. For she fell upon the soft rugs of her floor and lay there, tossing and writhing and sobbing like a thwarted savage.

"Horrible old man! To think that he should so suddenly develop a will of his own and leave me helpless! And I dare not—*dare not* defy him," she said to herself when she had grown calmer. "Ah, well, it must come sooner or later—why should I put it off to-day, only to face it to-morrow? Let Fate do her worst! But I shan't give ground without a struggle. Oh, how tired I am—how tired of it all! What a mess you've made of your life, my lady! And I've lost the path back to yesterday. I must go on and on, stumbling in the darkness. Oh, the loneliness and weariness of life! In spite of it all, I believe I've a conscience somewhere. I wish I could strangle it, and then—then I shouldn't suffer."

CHAPTER X.

At the end of the week Herman Ogilvie arrived.

Going down to dinner by way of the ancient black-walnut staircase, Mrs. Carnastor was confronted by an immaculate gentleman in evening dress, who bowed over her hand quite as if she had been born to her position. As they went into the dining room, she scrutinized him secretly, feeling a vague contempt for his very immaculateness, it was so wholly conventional. She detested a "beauty man," she told herself; and she had a wholesome scorn for a man who could not retain his composure under the knowledge that his trousers were not properly creased or that his tie failed to harmonize with his eyes.

She remembered, with the quick waking of half-sweet recollections, the cheerful, lawless personality of one man whom she had held ideal, who could no more have found the atmosphere of an "at home" congenial than could his brother the eagle.

This man was his antithesis—cool, placid, conventional, with a slow, conscious way of turning his look upon

her that roused a demon of impotent anger, it was so evidently a social trick. And that sudden lifting of his brows—quizzical, cynical, complacent, as if what he was thinking was a matter not to be lightly revealed—was not that, too, abominable? Why, the man couldn't be wholly honest with anybody!

Yet, when the dinner was half through, she began to doubt that first rapid judgment. Though she could scarcely define the impression, she began to feel that mere facial mannerisms could no more reveal this man's nature than could the outside of a book indicate its contents. He seemed *clean*, mentally, physically, and spiritually. His low voice, with a thousand differing inflections, soothed like slow-moving waters. He had none of the biting iconoclasm and scorn of things sacred that characterized most of the "young bloods" of the day. He was conventional without being unindividual.

For the rest, he was probably thirty-five or more, long of limb, lithe, well muscled—for though he moved with a drawing-room ease, there was about him a suggestion of repressed vitality. He had the slim hands of the artist, and his face would have been appealing had it not lacked wholly the fire of humanness—that quick warmth that leaps to the desire of another, the compassion for the sinner, the tenderness toward all humanity, whether on a throne or in a gutter. Then, too, it held a half-repellent sternness, a gravity and judicial calmness unusual in one so young.

"You didn't really want me here, did you, Mrs. Carnastor?"

Sitting opposite Betty at the dinner table, Ogilvie looked at her with eyes of inscrutable calm.

This direct attack swept her off her feet for an instant. She started, and glanced at him with a little flame in her eyes.

"Why not?" she asked, smiling. "I hope my husband's friends always feel welcome."

"Yes?" He smiled at her with quiet understanding. The smile was a revelation—it lit up the whole of the dark, rather sad face. "I merely made a sort of hit-or-miss guess. It isn't every woman who is so kind to her husband's friends. As a rule, she rather disapproves of them."

"I don't think I could disapprove of any one Victor liked," she began ingenuously, then bit her lips in vexation. Those quiet, kindly eyes—of an indescribable color that was neither blue nor gray, but a clever mixture of the two—seemed to read her as if she had been an open page. She was conscious of a subtle, scarcely defined fear of their scrutiny.

"Betty doesn't care about having any one about, that's true," chuckled her husband with what he believed to be an engaging frankness. "But I told her you were a charming boy, Herman."

On which Betty flushed hotly, but Mr. Ogilvie took the chuckle and the flattering phrase quite as a matter of course.

"She'll have to find out for herself how near I came to the truth," babbled Carnastor. "She pretends, Herman, to need no one but me, and says she's quite happy alone with her ailing old husband. Sometimes I think she must be lonely, but she never complains."

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Ogilvie, "she has resources of which you are ignorant."

Mrs. Carnastor shot a startled, half-piteous glance in his direction, but his face was innocent.

"I remember that my mother, who cared nothing for society in the usual acceptance of the term, used to fashion her own amusements. She read much, for she was a close student, and she used to sew a great deal for the poor

—she seemed never to have time for the foolish needlework and embroideries most women waste their time over. She was a real Lady Bountiful and visited much among the poor. They adored her. She always said that if one kept busy enough with the really vital things of life, one wouldn't admit too much froth. She lived her ideals—or, at least, her struggle to attain them was very steadfast. I suppose no one could ever be said to have attained his ideals."

"She was a fine woman, my boy, and as good as she was beautiful," asserted Carnastor, smothering a yawn. While the young man had been speaking of his mother, his eyes had softened with a tenderness as exquisite as love itself.

They went into the big, old-fashioned drawing-room together, Herman Ogilvie offering his arm to his hostess with a deferential courtesy that somehow irritated her. The icy aloofness that Mrs. Carnastor often used toward an undesirable person failed her here; against his cool, impersonal dignity it was like the silly petulance of a spoiled child. The sweet, appealing manner that quite won her husband's heart this man would detect at once as a pose. The wild, unreckoning gayety that at times took possession of her would no doubt shock and repel him. She therefore took refuge in what she hoped would appear mere dignified quiet, but which, it occurred even to her, really looked like stupidity. She shrugged helplessly, and decided that perhaps stupidity was the safest armor she could assume.

"I haven't forgotten your voice, lad," Carnastor was saying. "I want Betty to hear you sing. Come, boy, give us 'Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon' for the sake of the mother who used to love it. And I remember it was a favorite of your father's, too."

Herman did not hesitate; he sat down among the shadows that surrounded the old piano, and his throbbing voice, full of a pathos that hurt, filled the room.

CHAPTER XI.

"My dear boy," said Carnastor the morning afterward, "to tell the truth, I don't know what you're going to do for amusement in this dull hole."

Mr. Ogilvie looked across at him and smiled. There was a peculiarity about his smile, inasmuch as it combined a certain shrewdness with the open candor and sweetness of a child. For all its coldness and noncommittal calm, his face looked singularly capable of expressing passion and intensity, and, most wonderful of all, an infinite tenderness. One caught a glimpse of it in the sudden kindliness of that infrequent smile.

"Dear friend," he said in answer to Carnastor's plaint, "I beg that you won't trouble yourself about that. I came because there was a little matter I desired to look into, and I hoped to combine business with pleasure—but the pleasure lies in seeing you again."

Mrs. Carnastor had not yet appeared, and the two men were alone together in the little smoking room off the library.

"Business?" queried the older man, with a thoughtful air. "Beg pardon, Herman, I've forgotten if I ever knew, but did you go in for law, like your father? I heard somebody mention politics in connection with you, and I hoped——"

"No, I didn't take up law—interesting enough, but I need something more suited to my peculiar temperament. For my part, I want to be useful in some particular way. I've no desire to emulate the average man of means and be an encumbrance on the face of the earth. Life strikes me as a pretty serious affair. We weren't thrust into it without a purpose—of that I'm morally certain."

"And you're attempting to discover the purpose of your particular existence? I suppose you haven't found it yet?"

"Well, frankly, no. But in a way I'm at work. I've a profession, so far as that goes."

"And it is——"

Mr. Ogilvie smiled rather mysteriously. "Oh, no need to give it any particular name. You'll find out all about it soon enough. Let it suffice for the present that I'm an active member of the Society for the Suppression of Crime."

Hesitating, Carnastor put a tentative suggestion: "If you want to make speeches, Panberry isn't far off."

"I don't as a rule 'speak,'" said the young man, "not more than once, at any rate. I *act*."

As he looked across the room to where the old man sat, there came into the younger man's face an almost cruel intentness of purpose. He leaned forward, his long white hands clasped together, and studied the contented face of the other man.

"I'm a wolf in sheep's clothing," he thought. "But one shouldn't let even friendship stand in the way of one's duty. Poor old chap!"

Some one passed lightly through the hall, and he looked up to find Mrs. Carnastor in the doorway. Had she guessed at his thoughts? Apparently not; she was smiling lightly.

"Ah, good morning, dear!" Carnastor tossed away his cigar and held out his hand.

"Good morning!" she cried joyously, coming in with a little flutter of silken-gray draperies that seemed to have about them an eternal scent of spring violets. She crossed to her husband's side and dropped a wifely kiss upon his forehead.

"I hope you slept well, Victor. Won't you have Roberts take your chair out on the gallery? The morning is glorious."

The affectionate accents struck Mr. Ogilvie unpleasantly. He got up and strolled to the window.

"I think I'd like that. Perhaps Herman will play tennis with you in the court below—I should like to watch you."

"I—I'm wretchedly out of practice," stammered Mr. Ogilvie. "I've so little time for amusements, as a rule."

"And I play abominably," confessed Betty. "And I'm quite certain that Mr. Ogilvie would rather talk to you than play tennis with me. Besides, I —that is, I've some promised visits to make this morning. Old Nancy Leftwich is really ill."

"My love, you've no call to spend your time running after sick old women and crying babies. Do you think it exactly fair to our guest?"

The girl colored painfully, and glanced first at her husband and then at Herman Ogilvie, but she did not speak.

"So!" said the young man to himself. "My lady desires first of all to avoid a prolonged tête-à-tête with me." Aloud he assured her: "I shall be really distressed, Mrs. Carnastor, if you allow my presence to interfere with your usual routine. As I have told you, I have no desire to be 'amused'; probably in this I differ from the average guest. I just want to 'gang my ain gait.' If your husband doesn't mind and I have your permission, I should like to make a tour of the place."

Secretly rejoiced that the young man evidently desired to look after himself and form his own pastimes, Carnastor hastily agreed to the proposed plan, and the hostess nodded a careless acquiescence—rather too careless to be convincing, Ogilvie thought.

Half an hour later, Mr. Ogilvie, armed with a field glass, climbed to a wee balcony perched like an eagle's nest

near the roof of the great old house. He watched Mrs. Carnastor, in a blue cotton frock one of the maids might have worn, with a sun hat on her ruddy head, set out for the promised visits —probably to some of the tenants on the estate. A basket hung on one arm, and now and then she shifted its weight, as if it were a trifle heavy for her slender arms. She walked rapidly, head downbent. It was evident that she felt herself unobserved; her air was that of one occupied with her own thoughts and free to pursue them to a finish.

He left his post of observation, and, coming downstairs, sought the green forest that skirted the grounds of Boswell. Unobserved, he followed quietly in Mrs. Carnastor's wake until he had seen her enter and leave the last cottager's doorway. She came forth basketless, the sun hat on her arm, and, after a hurried scrutiny of the fields about her, struck out deliberately through the fringe of encroaching forest. This unexpected move necessitated a change of tactics upon the part of Mr. Ogilvie. If he deliberately crossed the open space between his present point of vantage and the sheltering trees beyond—and there was no other way to gain the desired point—he would undoubtedly be observed, and Mrs. Carnastor would discover that her guest, instead of quietly pursuing his intentions of making a tour of the estate, had followed her upon her errands of mercy.

"Of all things," he pondered, "I don't wish to arouse suspicion in the beginning. All right, *Mrs. Carnastor,* we'll let it go for this time, but perhaps, later on, we'll discover where you've been to-day."

In rather a thwarted frame of mind he went back to Boswell, entering a little wicket gate that led into the kitchen gardens and to the stables beyond.

"Hello, August!" he observed leisurely to the head groom, a young man with pop eyes and a wilderness of red hair, who was coming toward him with a handful of riding crops. "What do you say to showing me the horses?"

"There's not many of them now, sir," responded the boy, with evident regret. "The master never rides, of course, and he's about given up entering them at the races. This way, sir."

"Your mistress rides, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; oh, yes, sir; very well indeed."

"This is a fine animal," laying a connoisseur's hand upon Beelzebub's black satin back. "A magnificent brute, to be sure."

"Take care, sir! He's rather vicious this morning. We have to keep an eye on him when he's in a black mood. He's the devil's own to manage at times."

"Why do you keep him? He must be rather a care."

"He belonged to Mr. Carnastor's son, sir.'

"Oh, I quite understand!" His voice softened. "I didn't know the boy very well. I wonder," returning to the subject of the troublesome Beelzebub, "what your mistress thinks of him. She never goes near him, I suppose?"

"Well, now, sir, I'd ask you to say nothing about it, but Mrs. Carnastor *does* ride Beelzebub. But she says that if the master knew, he would be always uneasy, and besides he disapproves of her being much among the horses. But there's really no need for fear; she has Beelzebub under her thumb. Why, he's gentle as a lamb when she mounts him. You see, she conquered him in the beginning."

"Ah!" said Mr. Ogilvie under his breath. "One of Mistress Betty's accomplishments? And so Mrs. Carnastor is an animal trainer, eh, August? Well, I've an idea *I* could ride his satanic majesty."

"*You,* sir? Oh, no, I'm afraid——"

"Afraid?" Mr. Ogilvie laughed shortly. "That's nonsense. I'll be responsible."

The troubled groom led Beelzebub from his stall, and the black brute pranced and curveted, his flaring eyes turned menacingly this way and that.

"Ho, boy, not quite so fast! See here, do you think a strip of a girl can conquer you, and that I, a man, am going to put myself meekly out of the running? No, my friend Beelzebub. We'll have a try, at any rate."

He gave a sudden leap and was in the saddle. The amazed Beelzebub stood stock-still for an instant with the surprise of it; then, like a flash, he was off. The groom flew after the vanishing cloud of dust. His heart was in his mouth.

"Maybe it'll be all right," he panted as he steamed down the highway, "but I wish Mrs. Carnastor was here."

All right it might have been, for under the iron wrists the taut reins were surely drawing the angry beast to a reasonable pace, had not a farmer's cart suddenly appeared at a sharp turn of the road, laden with innumerable geese, wildly waving their noisy heads from the gaps in their cages.

At this spectacle, the already frightened animal went mad with terror. He reared swiftly and plunged forward, the unexpected movement upsetting the rider and plunging him headforemost into a patch of buttercups beyond the low stone fence that hedged one side of the road.

CHAPTER XII.

Swinging briskly along the down-sloping meadowland, the lady of Boswell came suddenly upon a scene that was very startling. A farmer's cart, stone-still in the middle of the highway and blocking the way of whosoever might come behind it, contained a bulging-eyed driver—whose very hair, beneath an enormous, battered straw hat, seemed to stand on end—and a very pandemonium of quacking geese. Flying to the scene of action, through a cloud of dust, came the figure of the head groom. Beelzebub, panting, quivering, but for the moment quiet, stood by the stone wall. But the light of battle was in his eye—a moment more and he would dash forward, wild past controlling.

Calling his name sharply, Betty ran toward him. But she stumbled and almost fell, and, looking down, saw the figure of a man prostrate at her feet. His face was upturned and very white, and one arm was crumpled under him.

Betty had been accustomed all her life to think and act quickly. Her father had been wont to say that she acted first and thought afterward. Now, however, in the fragment of time before either thought or action, as she looked down upon the inert figure, there flashed upon her a realization of the great attractiveness of the man. His likeness to the little print of St. Anthony of Padua that hung in her bedroom struck her as forcibly as if the two faces had been side by side.

After the one moment of indecision—and afterward, looking back, it seemed to the girl that her life paused there, in the bright sunshine of the late spring day, while her soul gave a great leap forward—she sprang nimbly across the stone wall and seized the panting Beelzebub by his trailing lines. His breath was like fire on her cheek. She called to him, sternly at first, then very softly. He reared angrily, bearing her with him, but he was visibly impressed at sound of her voice, and listened, though still prancing and snorting, the apoplectic August having arrived and forced the open-mouthed owner of the geese to move on out of earshot.

"Now go to Mr. Ogilvie," commanded Mrs. Carnastor breathlessly. "Carry him over there in the shade of

the trees. Then you must lead Beelzebub back to the stables and bring help."

Very gently the groom pulled the crumpled arm from beneath the prostrate figure.

"He's only fainted, I think, Mrs. Carnastor. I'm afraid his arm is broken. We'll have to try to make him comfortable." He lifted the limp figure with all the strength of his tense muscles and bore it across the road. "If you will hold Beelzebub a moment longer, madam, I can get some water," he suggested. "There's a spring near by."

"Then go quickly. I think I could bind Mr. Ogilvie's arm if I weren't hampered by this wretched brute." She flamed into primitive hatred of the majestic creature who had perhaps fatally wounded a brave and splendid man.

August came back with his straw hat leaking water, and, inwardly quaking, took charge of the snorting Beelzebub while Mrs. Carnastor ran hastily to the man under the trees.

Deftly she stripped off his coat and turned the sleeve back over the limp arm. A little crushed spray of buttercups fell upon her hand. Mastered by some inexplicable impulse, she thrust it hurriedly into the bosom of her gown. Tearing long strips from her lacy petticoat, she bound the injured arm with swift and tender fingers. With the cool spring water she laved the unconscious face, pushing back the thick dark hair with a gesture infinitely compassionate. She looked down into the quiet face.

"He has never suffered very much as yet," she said to herself, "but he has such a capacity for grief that his very look is pregnant with it."

When Ogilvie came out of his swoon, he found himself in his own room, under the kindly ministrations of the Panberry doctor. Mrs. Carnastor was bending over him.

"My dear Mrs. Carnastor, forgive me! I was stupid enough to faint, wasn't I? My arm—ugh!" as the movement brought a sudden pang. "I suppose it's broken. It was all my confounded fault. I *would* give Beelzebub a try. This is a beastly bore for you—but don't mind me. I'll be all right soon." But in spite of his smile, his lips whitened with pain.

"You've bandaged it, haven't you?" said old Doctor Ormson, smiling. "Quite scientifically, too. I wonder how many young women could do that."

And as darkness came down upon him for the second time, Ogilvie found himself reflecting that this was another of Mrs. Carnastor's unexpected accomplishments.

The housekeeper, coming in with a steaming bowl, caught the look of the eager face under its tousled, flame-colored hair. She was a good, sensible body, and bothered very little about other people's affairs. But she said to herself that old Mr. Carnastor was a fool to bring a handsome young gentleman like Mr. Ogilvie into his wife's colorless existence. She had seen a good deal of life, had Mrs. Peters.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ogilvie's convalescence was rapid—more rapid, it may be remarked, than was altogether agreeable to him, for he rather enjoyed the rôle of invalid. Almost against his will he discovered that his hostess was decidedly interesting, and that lady, having forgotten that she had regarded the young man as a menace, found herself looking forward to their hours together. As yet their companionship lay in the world of books. She read to him, and he commented shrewdly upon what she read. Her timid deference to his opinion was stimulating. More than once he wondered if she were merely drawing him out, forcing him airily into revelations of his most cherished ideas,

and retired precipitately into his shell of convention, only to be drawn out again by her questions.

One night he was brought down to the drawing-room. The bandaged arm gave him enough of the air of an invalid to send Mr. Carnastor into agonies of solicitude for his comfort. Lying back in an easy-chair, a trifle pale—enough to look interesting, Carnastor said—he smiled at his old friend's fussy kindliness.

"What's a broken bone or two when one gets all this attention?" he asked. "I feel like a matinée girl's favorite Algy, who has performed a noble deed and is suffering a sprained finger. Indeed, I don't deserve to be looked after so beautifully. I had no business trying to do something I shouldn't have."

"That infernal Beelzebub is going to kill somebody yet," fretted Carnastor. "I'd send him away, or shoot him, but —I always think of the day Ralph came dashing in at the gates, with the creature rearing and plunging and him keeping his seat like a centaur——"

There was a painful silence.

"Then he left him here, and when the news came——"

Mrs. Carnastor's brows drew down in a quick, hurt way, and she got up and went to the window.

"Sometimes, when I think of it, nothing seems to soothe me," whimpered the old man. "Play for me, Betty," he whispered presently. "That seems to lift the shadows, sometimes."

She hesitated, glancing from one to the other.

"Miss Allardyce says she plays wonderfully," exclaimed her husband, rousing. "I'm no judge of such things, but *you* are, Herman. You shall tell us what you think."

"Perhaps," said Betty, "Mr. Ogilvie doesn't care to be annoyed by amateurish efforts."

Mr. Ogilvie smiled. "That," he said lazily, "is more worthy of an affected schoolgirl than of you. I shall be happy to listen."

"A painfully conventional assurance," she complained, but she went across the room to the piano "I like to play for Victor because he goes promptly to sleep and doesn't even hear; then I can improvise without fear of boring any one. I don't know why it is, but some one nodding in the room affects me as pleasantly as a low wood fire."

"Behold me!" said the young man, stretching himself lightly into an attitude of slumber. "And take it for granted that I'm snoring."

Hands upon the keys, Mrs. Carnastor glanced back at him over her shoulder. The contrast between the old man dreaming in his chair, wrinkled, senile, helpless, and the lithe, muscular figure of the younger man, with his dark, handsome face, struck her as sharply as a blow. Something beat in her breast like coming thunder; her nerves quivered into tautness.

Then angrily she struck the keys, and dashed into a heartless *chanson* thick with artificialities; at its close came a haunting German *lied;* then—almost imperceptibly—she drifted into an improvisation.

It was in the country, under a far sky, and the peasants were going home from work, singing crude songs and making crude jokes, until a sudden patter of rain drove them to shelter. One saw the long, level fields green under the downpour, the peasants' cottages, the mountains indistinct in the distance. A girl laughed somewhere; a man's voice answered her.

Then the music changed, passing into stately measures as solemn as the footfall of a priest in his confessional. Vast cathedral arches seemed to span the majestic notes. Herman Ogilvie, listening, grew still with the solemnity of it. The old man dozed on, with closed eyes.

Out of a dim coldness into a still

greater dimness and coldness swept the great spirit of the music, until one stood, shuddering, upon formless heights, above vast, windy spaces of death, and heard a cry of desolation, the wail of the soul for something it had lost—or never known, which is the greater grief. There was no self-abnegation in that call of life for its own—only impatient pain and bitter rebellion. But of a sudden fell a sobbing quiet, and into the music crept that unthinkable loneliness of spirit that arises out of a great renunciation, when the soul, stripped of trapping or disguise, stands alone with its God, and is awed and *afraid*.

With a discordant crash the music ended, and the player's hands lay nervelessly upon the keys.

When she lifted her head, Ogilvie, pale and quiet, stood beside her. He had crossed the room unobserved. He put out his uninjured hand and touched hers. He was deeply moved; she saw that tears were not far off.

"My dear lady," he said, "who taught you to play like that?"

She met the question frankly, yet evasively.

"Life!" she answered.

CHAPTER XIV.

Several days later, in the warm and quiet softness of one of those early summer mornings when even nature seems drowsy, Mr. Carnastor sat upon the shaded gallery that swept around the west wing of the hall.

Near him, in a willow wind chair, his bandaged arm white against his dark coat, sat Herman Ogilvie. Their talk ran on desultorily for some time, with now and then long pauses. Below, in the flower gardens, Mrs. Carnastor was gathering roses, in a sauntering, preoccupied fashion indicative of straying thoughts. Both men watched the flutter of her light gown among the white and crimson flowers. The old man's eyes were full of a loving pride; Ogilvie's of the impersonal regard that he might have given an interesting butterfly.

Slowly, skillfully, he had led up to the story of Carnastor's marriage, beginning with the remark that, for a beautiful woman, Mrs. Carnastor was singularly content to bury herself in the country.

"Betty was not brought up to be a society woman," admitted the other man. "She knows nothing of the social game, and cares less. She is merely a charming child, Herman. I hope you've found her as delightful to know as I expected you would. You're one of my nearest friends, boy, so I needn't mind your knowing the story of my meeting with her. It'll help you to understand should you hear any of the foolish stories the stupid gossips have set afloat concerning her."

It was at mention of Monsieur and Madame Pardy that Ogilvie sat up, suddenly intent.

"And where did you say this interesting forest cottage is located?"

"Out of civilization, for the matter of that. It was miles from a railroad, and mail came once a week." He mentioned the address. "They were good old quiet people who knew nothing of the outside world and had no desire to leave their humble retreat."

A very faint, rather peculiar smile touched the lips of the younger man. He had drawn from his pocket, with a casual gesture, a handful of letters; on the back of one he unostentatiously scribbled the address of Monsieur and Madame Pardy.

"And the father—no one knows of his whereabouts?"

"No one. He was a worthless scamp, at any rate, and perhaps he has gone to his long account—we don't know." His pious accent said that he hoped so.

As Herman unconcernedly replaced the package of letters, Mrs. Carnastor

disappeared from the rose garden. He wondered idly if she meant to join them. Time passed, and a great bell pealed through the house, announcing luncheon.

"I wonder where the child has gone. She's forever away on wild-goose chases," grumbled Carnastor pleasantly.

At that moment Mrs. Carnastor came out upon the gallery in her riding habit, carrying a silver-mounted hunting crop.

"Is luncheon ready?" she sparkled. "I thought I heard the bell. Do you mind, Victor, if I don't change?" glancing down at the dark folds of her skirt.

"What would be the use? You'd probably be off again in half an hour," grumbled Carnastor in fond reproof. "Will you call Roberts, my dear? Ah, here he is!"

The two young people followed the wheel chair down the long corridor.

"If you'd been quite well," said the lady politely, "I should have asked you to ride with me."

"Was it Beelzebub this morning?" he asked in a low tone.

She colored, then retorted quickly, almost defiantly: "Yes. But he behaved beautifully—one might say contritely. I think he's experiencing a change of heart."

"Yes? Well, he can afford to, after he has vindicated his rights. But I don't believe that brute'll ever be caught experiencing the proper sort of conversion."

"Poor Beelzebub—give him his due! Even the devil deserves that."

"And rarely gets it," replied Ogilvie truthfully.

Luncheon over, Mrs. Carnastor rose.

"I must write some letters," she said languidly. "When I come down, I'd like to show you the conservatories, Mr. Ogilvie, if you will allow me, while Victor takes his after-luncheon nap. Until then I leave you to your own devices."

She passed from the room, holding up her riding skirt, a lithe, vivid figure in the gloom of the great room. Mr. Ogilvie and his host followed shortly, the servant pushing the latter's chair out into the sunlight of an upper balcony.

"Come out with me and talk to me until Betty joins us," invited the old man.

Ogilvie nodded.

"In a moment."

He had caught sight of a scrap of paper, covered with sprawling letters, at the foot of the stairs. He surmised that Mrs. Carnastor had dropped it on her way to her room. He picked it up and went into the little morning room at the end of the hall.

"I suppose I've no real right to read it," he reflected, "but 'all's fair in love and war,' and this is—war."

The letter read:

MY DEAR ROSE: I hear you've inveigled a rich old party into actual, bona-fide, all-wool-and-a-yard-wide matrimony. Bully for you, young lady! You always did manage to get what you wanted. Admirable trait it is, too. Though where in Gehenna you met the old soul puzzles me. Lucky he happened to be lying around loose, wasn't it?

However, that's neither here nor there. When I flew the coop and dumped you onto those poor old reformed sneakers—with a question mark after reformed—I guess you thought pretty badly of me. But it was about the only thing possible—to a fellow who must make a quick get-away. And of course I knew you were shrewd enough to shift for yourself—hadn't you been doing it for an age? I'll admit I didn't think you'd manage it quite so neatly, however. Mrs. Carnastor, of Boswell Hall—umph!

I'm a free man, my girl—at least, until the next bit of tough luck strikes and I go up again. I don't mean to bother you or your fine friends, and I won't try the "Give me back me chee-ild!" stunt—not at all. You're a whole lot better off where you are. All I'm writing for is to ask for a lift at this particular change o' the moon—even a couple of hundreds would be a special dispensation, and you'll never miss it. Send it to the inclosed address, like a dutiful daughter.

I suppose you're asked to all the big

houses? The next swell blow-out one of 'em puts up, couldn't you tip me the wink? It'll never hurt you—I'll swear to that. Nobody'd ever know I was anything to you, in case I flunked the deal. But, given a fair chance, I'm a hard one to catch. Ain't that so?

Do send the money at once—a couple of hundreds, anyway, and as many more as you like. YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

P. S.—What about the forgery case, anyway? The last one, I mean. Was it dropped? Accept my sympathy. I did hear that Cathcart had gone up again. Must have been devilish hard on him this time, with no cat's-paw between him and the fire.

The letter was without address, date, or signature. Mr. Ogilvie scanned it hastily, but none the less thoroughly on that account. Then, glancing into the hall and hearing no one astir, he went swiftly to the foot of the stairs and dropped Mr. Donohue's fatherly effusion where he had found it.

He was not a moment too soon. Hardly had he rejoined his host, who lay dozing in his wheel chair, when Mrs. Carnastor came running down the stairs with a pale, concerned face. Seeing the letter lying apparently where she had dropped it, she snatched it up with a smothered exclamation and ran hastily up the steps.

CHAPTER XV.

An hour afterward she came downstairs, cool, sedate, and immensely unconcerned, in a flowered muslin frock that left bare half of her slender brown arms.

"You're not going out again?" demanded Mr. Ogilvie, whom she met in the hall. "I've been hoping you'd ask me to ride with you."

"After your recent experience with our friend Beelzebub?" she asked in mock horror. "If you feel equal to it, I might drive you through the woods in the pony cart."

He laughed outright.

"Of all the forms of diversion to offer an able-bodied man! I suppose you've guessed that I detest pony carts and the fat, useless midgets that go with them. Suppose, as the kindly hostess, you sacrifice your woodland ramble and talk to me."

"I'd be glad to, if you're sure you've nothing better to do." Her voice held a sudden hint of wistfulness, as if an hour of comradeship with a heart as young as her own carried irresistible appeal.

"I'm quite sure I haven't," said Ogilvie. "And I've been wanting to talk with you for some time."

"Dear me, hear the man!" said Betty. "Haven't I been chatting my head off for your entertainment and delectation ever since you came that nasty cropper?"

"You call it chatting, I suppose—those literary séances we endured together when we might have been talking about something worth while?"

"*Endured?*" Mrs. Carnastor turned amazed eyes upon him. "I never enjoyed anything so in my life. Why, I'd never even read Chaucer until you came."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ogilvie, with commendable gravity. "I feel almost embarrassed at having opened such a wealth of knowledge to a benighted soul."

They laughed together joyously, like two children on a holiday, then Betty exclaimed:

"And Dante! But for him I'd not have gone down into the Inferno. It was a marvelous experience, I assure you. I'd heard of him in a vague way, but I give you my word of honor I didn't know the lowest hell was of *ice!*"

Mr. Ogilvie, late of Oxford, was naturally abashed by this shameless confession, and sought to switch the discussion into simpler channels.

"Let's not talk about hell," he ad-

monished piously. "It's depressing. Let's try the optimism of a certain genial soul whose memory I love:

"The world is so full of a number of things I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings!"

She nodded. "Yes—he puts it very prettily. But you needn't have quoted him. You could have said that quite as well yourself."

"I wonder if the wish was father to the thought? You might at least have been kind enough to thrill my spirit with the usual feminine formula: 'You're so different from other men.' Instead, you assure me delicately, but quite explicitly, that I'm horribly commonplace."

"Well, I don't often flatter," said Betty thoughtfully; "least of all, *men*. A man's vanity needs no aids to growth; it's born full-fledged, like Minerva."

"So the average man's most noticeable characteristic is his vanity, eh? Is no one of us exempt?"

They had passed through the conservatories, and emerged into the grounds. Strolling idly, they reached the rose garden, and the girl pointed to a rustic seat under a tangle of scarlet roses.

"Let's sit here and dream," she said contentedly. "I warn you that I can't talk small talk."

"Then we've one failing in common—I can't, either. But you haven't answered my question."

She hesitated, scanning his face.

"I don't think I should call you a very vain person, Mr. Ogilvie—only an exceedingly earnest one. Sometimes the very force of one's personal enthusiasm is mistaken for vanity. And indeed you're quite, *quite* different."

"Well, now, that's better, if a trifle noncommittal," he said. "Every man likes to think he's like no other man."

She observed musingly: "I've heard it said that when a woman knows one man, she knows his sex, but that when a man knows one woman, the rest are a sealed book to him."

"Women," said Herman sententiously, "see men only as they imagine them to be. A woman in love, for instance, doesn't see the ordinary two-by-four chap his acquaintances know him to be, but an Olympian deity. It's a tragedy when the scales fall, as they sometimes do. But the wise man will see to it that the scales do not fall."

The girl studied him curiously for a moment.

"Just what makes her love him at all, I wonder."

"My dear Mrs. Carnastor," said he, with a large gesture, "that question is as old as Eden. I've often wondered myself. And by observation and thoughtful meditation, I—that is, I've come to a few conclusions on this important subject."

"You mean——"

"That dimly I comprehend the A B C's of her inclination and preference, and to an extent I know *why* she loves him—to an extent only, however."

"Well?" Mrs. Carnastor's serious smile was a bit disconcerting.

"To begin with," informed Ogilvie, "a man who wants a woman's love must first of all be—a man. That is, he must impress her with his manhood, even if it's only a poor sort in reality. Then he must make her feel his interest in her—that she is always in his thoughts, plans, and dreams; that there is no detail concerning her that isn't of vital moment to him. He must be able to enter into and anticipate her emotions, and know a great many things without being told. He must have appreciation, defer to her judgment, appear to depend upon her opinions. But, above all, I think every woman loves to feel that back in a man's nature there is a strength that will never yield to her one jot; a strength to beat and bruise herself against in times of revolt and to lean on in times of crisis.

I know it isn't a twentieth-century assertion, but there's a good deal of the 'clinging vine' in most women."

"Well," said Betty decidedly, "it's evident you're a student of your fellows, and I suppose it's true that the proper study of mankind is man. I'll pigeonhole all this valuable information you've imparted—one can never be too well informed. But—I don't like clinging vines. I like that phrase, 'the *militant* sex,' even if it is applied to us in jest."

"*You* a militant?"

"Certainly," she returned, with dignity. "I mean to go in for prison-reform work some day. You see, I know a good deal about it." She crimsoned consciously, then hurried on: "When I'm lecturing about in the complacency of power—flat-heeled shoes, spectacles, and a frock eight years old, *à la* the typical female reformer—you'll turn out to hear me, I suppose?"

"I will," promised Mr. Ogilvie fervently. "I will, indeed. And I'll bring all my friends."

"I'll be over in the East End proper, you know—and you never saw a real 'tough' in your life, did you?"

"Didn't I, though?" He quickly stifled his sudden enthusiasm and glanced at her, half alarmed. "I mean—certainly not. And what do *you* know about the East End?"

An involuntary smile passed over her face and was gone as swiftly as it had come.

He went on, after a pause, as if the idea had been in his mind for some moments: "Do you know, I've been thinking about your playing the other night? It was wonderful. I wish you'd tell me who taught you music."

"The merely mechanical part of it," said Mrs. Carnastor, "came from a greasy little German with a wart on his nose, who was a great and beautiful genius, but because he was queer and dirty, not many people found it out. He said that I must be a pianist, and upon the strength of his enthusiasm my father tried to fit me for the stage. Then the German went away and father grew discouraged. He said that queer, uncanny improvising of mine wasn't music, and that no one would listen. So he left off trying to make me what I could never be. I kept on improvising, however. Those were unreal, lonely days. I remember wanting to love and be loved more than anything else in the world. And I played my heart out to mythical playmates and friends."

Her listener sat in a grave silence, looking straight ahead, apparently lost in reverie. Even the alighting of a passing bird upon the rose bough behind them did not disturb him. Betty also fell into silence, but her thoughts were of him. She was thinking that never before had she seen any face with the purity and resolution, the cold charm, the somber, dominating determination, the power of infinite renunciation, glimpsed behind the slight veil of self-superiority, that made this man's features an enigma. She remembered also the contradictory humanness of his rare smile, flashing like winter sunshine across the strength and hardness of his personality.

He said suddenly: "I wish you'd tell me all about yourself—the brief whole of your life. Am I asking too much?"

She frowned, and began to beat a tattoo on the arm of the rustic bench. Her eyes were absent.

"Indeed, yes. Only a fool looks back for long. I particularly dislike reminiscing."

He did not press the point. "Do you know that you're a sort of Chinese puzzle to Panberry? Every one who has seen you has a different opinion in the matter. Mrs. Creagh regards you as a designing minx; your husband thinks of you as a lovely child, ignorant of life and its possibilities. Now which

are you—or are you, after all, a composite?"

She laughed nervously.

"Oh, dear, no; I'm nothing half so interesting as that." She got up suddenly. "Shall we go back? It's growing late."

She stood looking up the terrace to where the Hall lifted its outline against a marvelous gold-and-sapphire sky. A flaunting peacock, with Oriental display of color, passed slowly across the velvet sward. A deep silence and peace lay upon the summer landscape, and far away the hills melted softly against the breast of the clouds. Closer by, the gaunt tower of the prison showed, an ominous spot against the lacelike trees and the fading, flaring sky. Slowly Mrs. Carnastor's look traveled toward it, and rested there.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the days that followed, the intuitive misgivings the advent of her husband's friend had brought died completely out of Mrs. Carnastor's heart. She began rather to regard him with an involuntary trust and confidence that she had never given any one. She confessed to herself that she had never seen any man like him. His reserved but very evident understanding, his quiet responses to her moods, his almost spiritual keenness of appreciation, and his genuine, buoyant belief in a purposeful life, were revelations to her.

She liked his impersonal interest in her, liked his reluctant but evident admiration, and with the vanishing of her early suspicion of him a great and fervent reverence for him sprang to life. He was so far above her in the purity of his ideals, thought the girl humbly; if only she could in time climb to those white heights and view life from his standpoint! She began to grow vaguely discontented with herself, without being able to explain why.

She did not know, and had no reason for surmising, the extent of his interest in her. Most certainly she did not know that scarcely a waking movement of hers had escaped him since he had been in Panberry; that she was constantly, without knowing it, under his strict surveillance; that rarely had she left the house without his knowing where she went and how long she was away. So quietly and shrewdly did he follow the routine of her days that Betty Carnastor, herself shrewd and watchful, accustomed to suspecting and fearing her fellows, was unaware of this singular espionage.

It would doubtless have amazed her, had the working of her guest's mind been laid bare, to find that only one thing regarding her troubled him and left him at a loss for explanation—her mysterious visits to the prison; and that more than once he had watched her disappear within the iron gates and waited outside, chafing at his inability to follow her.

It was a gray day of wind and rain and gloom. Few people were abroad, and Panberry had the deserted look of a camp whose tents have been folded. Under the dripping Lombardy poplars stood Herman Ogilvie, intent upon the figure emerging from the prison gates, and pondering deeply upon many possibilities, turning each over in his mind and rejecting it after it had assumed form and substance.

Mrs. Carnastor, in raincoat and slouch hat, was on foot, and hurried past him, unaware of his vantage ground among the thick-leaved poplars—so close that he saw she was ghastly pale, with blue shadows under her eyes. The hurt, strained look caught at his heart like a child's impotent grief, even while he denounced her in his mind.

The rain splashed unheeded upon the brim of his wide hat, under which his hair had begun to crisp about his tem-

ples in a way his mother had adored. He stood lost in thought until arrested by the sight of a prison official striding through the wet grass.

"I beg your pardon." Ogilvie touched his arm. "Wasn't that Mrs Carnastor who just left the jail?"

The man stared; then suddenly his brown face went into a grimace of disgust.

"I don't know that it's any affair of *yours*," he answered curtly. And before Herman could protest, he had walked away.

"Bribed—the infernal lot of them!" was Ogilvie's angry mental comment as he sought admittance at the iron gates. The visiting hours were about to close, but he was admitted and shown with respectful courtesy through the place. Cunningly he swept each face with seeking and inscrutable eyes as he passed, and presently he inquired of the official who guided him:

"I wonder if you've had any recent additions to your fine collection here? Happen to have a convict named Donohue—Jack Donohue? He has a dozen aliases—Forest, Helmar, Norton—but his real name is Dangerfield. Pretty well-known crook."

The official shook his head. "No—never heard of him."

"He's supposed to be a free man just now—somewhere in Canada, if I'm not mistaken—but I thought perhaps he might have been sent up very recently."

"We haven't had a new one in for six months or more," explained the official, with the bored abstraction of one giving statistics.

Ogilvie's brows drew together.

"I suppose the great ladies about here are quite thoughtful of the poor fellows—visit them and send wines and jellies and all that sort of thing?"

"Well—sometimes. They bring their visitors here mostly."

"I've been told that several of them have a fad for slumming. Mrs. Victor Carnastor, for instance—isn't she quite interested in—ah—prison conditions?" he went on, watching the man's face with covert intensity.

"I don't know about that, sir," said the latter, without turning a hair.

"But she visits the prison sometimes?"

"Yes, sir; sometimes."

He dared go no farther for fear of defeating his own purpose. He thanked the man and withdrew, obliged to confess himself no wiser than when he had entered.

Long and deeply he pondered as he went back through the deepening downpour to the Hall.

That night Mrs. Carnastor came down to dinner in a gown of vivid crape that warmed her face like firelight. Scanning her with rather more than his usual keen observation, Ogilvie came to the conclusion that she had been crying, and that for the first time since he had known her the "hare's foot" had been brushed across the pallor of her cheeks.

"Something has happened," he thought. But no reflection of his scrutiny appeared in the level voice with which he greeted her.

"It's been a nasty day," she observed. "But I always think a day like this makes one appreciate luxury," with a glance about the softly lighted room.

"A disagreeable day, indeed," he echoed. "Have you been out at all this afternoon?"

She gave a touch to a pile of Oriental cushions, changed the position of a vase, and straightened the Chinese embroidery of a table cover with deft, housewifely hands before she answered casually:

"I like to sleep on an afternoon like this. The rain on the roof is an exquisite lullaby."

"So you've been indulging in a siesta? I took a turn in the storm for the sake

of the peculiar beauty of your upland meadows gray with rain. It was worth it."

The glint of the light caught her hair as she turned for an instant toward him. "I *adore* rain! I can't understand any one's not loving it. 'A rainy day!' we say, as if it were a calamity. Why, it has a charm that the sunniest day can't rival. I could walk in the rain forever——" Then she bit her lip and was silent. It was Betty Donohue who had spoken—impetuously, without thought—not the languid lady who preferred to sleep away the rain.

"Ah, here's Victor!" she said, relieved, as that gentleman entered with the faithful Roberts in his wake.

At dinner her husband looked over at the slight, vivid figure with a tender smile.

"What have you been doing to-day, dear? A rainy day is hard to get by, isn't it?"

"Just what Mr. Ogilvie and I were saying. He's been prowling about in the rain. I said I could think of no better way to spend a rainy afternoon than to sleep."

"I agree with you. That's how I passed this one mostly. Roberts read to me for a while—some memoirs I'm interested in. I'm accustomed, anyway, to being indoors."

"I should have been glad, Victor, to read to you."

"I know it, my dear love—I know it. But I didn't wish to disturb you. Your maid, when I asked about you, thought you were napping."

Ogilvie met his hostess' eyes; they were serene and innocent.

"If you needed to be entertained," he said to Mr. Carnastor, "I would have remained at home to talk to you."

"I'm a poor sort of creature for *you* to talk with, Herman. Half the time I don't know what you're talking about."

"Well," advised Ogilvie, "you might adopt the policy of most of my friends and pretend that you do, anyway. When I get on a hobby, I usually ride it to death, but few of those compelled to listen confess openly that they neither know nor care anything about the matter. Our modern society makes one, outwardly at least, unselfish——"

Betty interrupted him.

"Victor never deals in that sort of hypocrisy," she flashed unexpectedly. "He's all sincerity and goodness."

The old man looked up with shining eyes.

"Bless you, my dear——" he began, when, without warning, Mrs. Carnastor left her place and flung herself, sobbing, on her husband's breast.

"My darling—my darling girl! What is the matter? Has some one been annoying you? What can have happened? Betty, my love——"

Ogilvie pushed back his plate and rose.

"Mrs. Carnastor——"

His perceptible astonishment stung her to self-control. She stood up, trying to smile.

"What a selfish wretch I am to inflict tears upon two helpless men! It's nothing—indeed, *nothing*. Pray believe me, both of you. I don't know what possessed me—blue devils, I suppose."

"But, my dear," protested her husband, "you're no lachrymose creature. I don't believe I ever saw you cry before."

She met his perturbed regard with a burst of hysterical laughter. "Pray don't imagine there was ever a woman who didn't cry, Victor, for indeed 'there ain't no sich critter'!"

She went back to her seat with mirth on her lips and tears in her eyes.

Dinner proceeded with no further diversion. Once or twice during the evening Herman caught a furtive quiver of the lip which told him that the secret emotion which had caused Mrs. Carnastor's tears had not quite

subsided. In an effort to drive the worry lines from his old friend's face, he talked cheerfully and steadily, until the old man fell asleep under the sound of the low, soothing voice.

When his eyes had closed, Betty got up with a murmur of apology and left Ogilvie alone with the sleeper. She appeared no more that night.

CHAPTER XVII.

It rained during the night and all the next day—a steady downpour that brought an autumnal chill into the air. From the window the rose garden had a bedraggled look, like a spangled ball gown left out in the wet. The hills were swathed in a dull-silver mist that deepened and lowered with the day.

Rather disconsolately Herman Ogilvie wandered about the big, lonely house. Carnastor, who had had an "attack" in the night and was not yet recovered, lay in his wheel chair in the library and talked fitfully at intervals. Mrs. Carnastor, pleading a headache, kept her room; really kept it, as Mr. Ogilvie discovered.

Late in the afternoon, in a mood of unwonted softness, she sought her husband in his study and read to him until the old-fashioned dinner gong, never to be displaced by a mincing verbal announcement, sounded the hour. The old man watched her with open tenderness.

"You're quite sure you're feeling all right now, dear?" he asked for the twentieth time.

And Betty, who a month ago would have found the question unbearably tiresome, bent and kissed him very gravely.

"Quite, *quite* sure," she soothed him.

The night was a bit of autumn set in the midst of summer. About the old Hall the wind howled with increasing violence, and on the sloping roofs one heard the steady beat of the rain. But inside, the drawing-room presented a scene of unusual warmth and cheer, for on the hearth blazed a ruddy fire, and the flames danced over the long, imposing room, now lighting the somber portraits and tapestries on the wall, now flickering off to catch at the gilt of some Victorian chair, or to lie for an instant upon the satinwood sheen of an Italian cabinet. The heavy crimson curtains had been drawn across the windows, and on the rug before the fire one of Mrs. Carnastor's great Danes lay slumbering in lazy state.

Mrs. Carnastor was in a mood of amazing light-heartedness; her guest reflected that he had never seen her in just this humor of irresponsible, almost daring, vivacity. The sparkle of her laugh was infectious; even her husband, who shivered once or twice, complained of the drafts, and regretted that he was not feeling quite "up to the mark," looked at her in slight wonder. She was a clever raconteuse, when she wished to be, with a fund of stories at her tongue's end, and to-night she brought the best of them to light for the edification of the two men, who now and then broke into involuntary laughter.

"Don't you dote on an open fire?" Betty asked, spreading her slender hands to the flames. "If there's anything in life more soothing than the 'Dies Iræ' or a spring twilight, it's 'flames on the hearth o' home.'"

Ogilvie admitted that he was not insensible to their appeal.

"They symbolize all that's bright and warm and—*settled*," she said. "All that the homeless wanderers on the outside, looking in upon, know that they've missed. And it's terrible to miss a vital thing out of life, isn't it? The hearth o' home—the hearth o' home——"

The matter of lights had evidently escaped the mind of the servant whose duty it was to see to them, and Betty did not ring. Instead, with a gliding step like a skillful dancer's, she melted

into the shadows at the end of the room and laid her hands caressingly upon the piano keys.

After a while she began to sing, almost under her breath. She had no singing voice to speak of—that is, so far as volume or technique went, but it had the same contralto note, giving warning of intensity and passion, that broke through her ordinarily level tones in speech. It arrested the ear as mere brilliancy, mechanical skill, or perfected technique could never have done.

By the fire the two men smoked pleasantly together.

"I shall be going up to town pretty soon," said Herman; "in a few days, I think. I'll be sorry to go. You've no idea what this visit has meant to me."

"Panberry isn't half bad," agreed Carnastor. "But isn't it a trifle sudden, your idea of leaving so soon? We can't give you up just yet."

"It won't be an eternal farewell by any means," smiled Ogilvie. "But just now it's necessary for me to run up for a few weeks at least."

Meanwhile, at the piano, Betty idled through varying melodies—snatches of operas, old songs, and vague, tender bits of improvisation.

During a pause, her husband turned his head upon his pillow, glanced in her direction, and said:

"Do you remember the little 'fireside song,' dear? It's been a long time since I heard it. It was a great favorite of my son's," he explained to Herman, "and I remember that his mother, too, was fond of it and sang it to him often. It's very simple, but, like many simple things, it catches at the heartstrings. I found it somewhere set to music, and Betty, dear child, sang it for me once or twice. It hurt—at first. There were so many memories——"

He sighed, and, leaning back, closed his eyes.

"I feel to-night as if I should like to hear it—as if I should like to go to sleep with the sound of it in my ears."

After a moment the girl struck the simple, plaintive chords; then her low voice, vibrant with feeling, reached them:

"Night, and the curtains drawn,
The household still——"

The old man stirred in his chair. Once he reached out a trembling hand, and the other man thought he heard him whisper his young son's name.

"Close to the dying blaze
We sit alone;
Naught but the old days lost,
All else—our own.

"Far in the corners dim
The shadows start;
Near to your strength I cling,
And near to your heart.

"Dearest—the whole world ends,
Ends well—in this,
Night, and the firelit dark,
Your touch, your kiss."

When the last note died away, the player rose softly and came to stand by the old man, one hand on his shoulder.

"He's asleep," she said, and went over to a corner by the fire. "Do you know," she told Herman presently in an undertone, "I'm just beginning to realize how it may be with age? Everything is in the past—not, as it is with you and me, in the future. He told me to-day that for the first time in his life he felt that he was growing tired and that he could understand a quaint epitaph he had once seen in an old German churchyard: 'I will awake, O Christ, when thou callest me, but let me sleep a while, for I am very weary.' The inevitableness of the tired time is appalling when you come to think of it."

He said gravely: "It won't come to you for a long while yet, I'm thinking."

She appeared to ponder. "I don't know. Life is always beautiful, even in its darker aspects; but there are times, even in youth, when one tires

and wonders if the game is worth the candle. That, however, is only a passing phase. Deep down in our hearts we know that life is always good. But if ever it grows intolerable, there's an easy enough way out of it, isn't there?"

He looked profoundly shocked. "You mean—suicide?"

"That's what *you* would call it. To some of us it would only mean the right to dispose of one's life as one saw fit. Having lived with one's own soul, knowing oneself, feeling, thinking, understanding all that concerned one better than any one else could possibly do, surely one would know what was best for oneself."

"You don't really believe that?"

She smiled—a little wearily. "No, I don't. I don't believe any one ever yet had the right to fling away a mystery past his comprehension, for he couldn't know until it was too late where it was tending, for what purpose it had been given. And when we hold a strange bubble with the prism of heaven on it in our careless hands, the right thing to do is to let God break it. We'd be sure to bungle things if we let it fall of our own accord."

In astonishment the hearer looked at her. The diablerie of an hour ago was gone; she was as sweet, as grave, as friendlily intimate as ever his mother, that person of high degree, could have been. And there was no pose in the wistful sweetness of her regard. Perhaps the little song, whose echo seemed still to hover in the quiet room, had touched the very soul of this enigmatical woman, bringing to the surface the best that was in her. In his chair her husband slept on, undisturbed.

"How could you know that?" asked Ogilvie. "You who have known only the 'under side of things'?"

She did not marvel at his knowledge of the past's breadths and depths; she seemed scarcely to think of it.

"He who hasn't known the 'under side of things,'" she said, "isn't really worth the knowing. There's a great lack somewhere. It's only when one has known all sides of the prism, life, that one understands that wonderful French proverb, 'To know all is to forgive all.'"

"And you would have men—and women, too—go under the surface, staining themselves black, merely in order that they may understand the isolation of the black sheep?"

She nodded. "Just that. And perhaps the dreadful stain wouldn't materialize, or, if it did, it probably would only serve to throw their whiteness into clearer relief and make them human. I tell you," she exclaimed passionately, "there are women who could go into the depths of hell and come back only the better for it!"

She was sitting rigid upon the edge of her chair, hands twisted together, glowing eyes challenging him.

"That," he presently found courage to state, "is probably true. But—*not every woman!*"

So wholly intent were they upon each other that a soft step at the door startled them, and the apologetic Roberts, coming in to look after his charge, took on the aspect of an anticlimax. So profoundly did his master slumber that the faithful henchman was for wheeling him quietly from the room.

"I can let the chair down, madam, and arrange him comfortably in his own room. Then I can get him into bed more easily. It isn't often he sleeps so well; it would be a pity to disturb him."

"Indeed, yes," said Betty. "Take care of him, Roberts. He hasn't been quite himself to-day."

Left alone, the two people by the hearth sat gazing into the fire without speaking. The room was full of shadows. Little flames danced hither and thither, now disappearing, now bursting

forth redly. Outside on the terraces and roofs fell the monotonous rain, the exquisite lullaby of dreams.

Slowly, subtly, the warmth and the drowsy shadow-and-flame atmosphere of the wonderful old room crept into the soul of the girl, lulling her into the silence of contentment. She stared absently into the heart of the flames, and drew a little sigh of absolute peace. The glistening buttercup yellow of her gown made a point of glowing color in the dull room, and the firelight haloed her ruddy hair until Herman thought vaguely of Brünhilde guarded by the sacred fire. Then he smiled at himself for the irrelevant fancy. Brünhilde—and Betty Donohue!

Just then she looked up, meeting his gaze.

"Do you hear the rain?" she asked dreamily. "What a wonderful sound it is when one is happy! The long nights—and the rain on the roof—— But, ah, the wretchedness of it when one is unhappy—alone!"

He turned about in his chair to face her, and she saw that he had changed color.

"And you," he said slowly, deliberately, "you have known it all, haven't you—the gamut of life? The nights of happiness and the days of desolation; fear and confidence; light and shadow; hope and despair—the marvelous whole of it. Ah, don't speak, for, you see, I *know.*"

The words in themselves were of little import, but his tone, the intense severity of his regard, brought her upright, a chill clutch of fear at her heart. He went on quietly:

"At the first, you were merely the plaything of circumstance. You were unfortunately born—or rather *spawned*—into the world. You imbibed careless ideals of decency and morality from your slipshod mother, your worse-than-slipshod father. You really liked the father best, because there was a sort of *entente cordiale* between you that you and your mother knew nothing of. He rather liked you, because you were sharp and amusing and quickly learned to discriminate in his behalf. So with him you went knocking from post to pillar and from pillar to post, a waif on the undercurrents of life, with a distorted viewpoint and an idea that what the world owed you was not to be boldly demanded and received, but filched, as a thief filches.

"Then, when your mother was choked to death by a jealous lover in an underground café, you became more and more the dependent and admirer of your father. He was pretty well known by this time—to the detectives of two continents. He was what you'd call attractive, in spite of that inborn propensity for evil. A man who knew him spent an hour informing me that a man may be wicked, selfish, and cruel, yet lovable. 'This may seem paradoxical,' he said, 'but I believe you know that a man may be loved most for the very faults that make him dangerous.' This unique point of view, I must confess, was quite beyond me; I haven't yet attained to it."

There he paused, his fine, æsthetic face full of scorn, but not once did he glance toward the little huddled figure by the fire.

"When you were sixteen," he went on, "an age at which sheltered children are in school, carefully mothered or chaperoned, you were quite the daughter of your father. You had even been with him behind the prison bars. Not as a prisoner, of course, but as his companion. But a few years later your own confession pronounced you a criminal. You were charged with forgery, and you had come very near causing another to suffer for your crime—a man who was innocent. But because you were young and pretty and appealing, you got off scot-free.

"Next," he continued ruthlessly, "we

find you masquerading as a great lady in one of the oldest and most aristocratic homes in America. Exactly how you got there Heaven only knows; but the woman who was expected that day was a stranger, an Austrian, famed for her eccentricity, her beauty, and her democratic methods of travel. It so happened that the real guest never turned up. It was *you* who presented yourself as a princess of the blood royal, who had the baggage, the jewels, the name of the Austrian. When the house party was about to dissolve, the 'princess,' who had been a notable success and had been pronounced a marvel of intellect, grace, and charm, disappeared suddenly, and with her the splendid collection of diamonds and emeralds owned by a grand-opera singer, with whom the sham princess had been especially intimate.

"It was then discovered that the real princess had been killed in a railroad wreck while on her way to this particular house party. As surely as if the earth had yawned and swallowed her, the counterfeit noblewoman had disappeared. The only thing really discovered was that she was the daughter of Jock Dangerfield, the insouciant, cheery-mannered gentleman of Scotland Yard fame. Knowing who she was was one thing, but discovering her was another. She was a shrewd one, that young lady. She had a knack of eluding one that was little short of genius.

"The matter seemed finally to have dropped. It was brought to life again, after the years, by a certain mésalliance. An old man with millions had married in his dotage an attractive nobody, and with the stir that it created, some well-intentioned individual who had seen her remarked upon her striking likeness to a certain Jock Dangerfield, who had been in the public eye once too often. That opened immediately a field for speculation. Perhaps—who knew?—she was the masquerader who had made off with the Polish singer's 'swag.' And so——"

He stopped abruptly—for he had been pacing to and fro as he talked—and flung out both hands in a gesture that meant more than any words. He stood directly before her, his grim young face accusing, pitiless. He looked full into the frightened eyes, the appalled white face. The youth, the tenderness, the sweetness were gone from that face—gone as a candle is blown out by a draft.

Huddled, white, tortured, at his mercy, she was no longer the great lady, mistress of herself and any situation that might present itself, but the cornered outcast, the evader of justice, the trapped prey.

She got out, with a gasp:

"In God's name, *who are you?*"

He answered at once:

"I, my dear lady, am a detective, a professional detective, put by my chief upon the trail of *Rose Dangerfield!*"

With a choking sound she fell back into her chair. Her lips moved.

"Victor——"

Herman Ogilvie made a gesture of impatience.

"My friend Carnastor need not be brought into the discussion. He loved and befriended you, and because he was foolish and impressionable, you trapped him into marriage. You wanted the prestige, the security, his name would give you. All that is in the past; it can't be remedied."

Outside, on some distant roof, fell the endless drip-drip of the wintry-sounding rain. Now and then an angry gust spat at the windows. The house was very still. In the great, dim room, there was a silence like the sudden stillness of death. The firelight flickered, flamed, crackled slowly into a bed of coals, whose red glow lighted only the two tense figures before it.

Then Ogilvie spoke:

"Not exactly the right thing to do,

perhaps, from your standpoint—to come into a man's house as his friend in order to deliver the wife of his bosom to the stern judgment of the law. And yet there was no other way. I've a mania for meeting the devil on his own ground. If I could have spared my friend——"

There her frozen silence broke. She crumpled to her knees before him, abject, piteous, shaken with a terrible emotion.

"Not *him*—not your friend and mine! He *trusted* me——"

"Yes," said Ogilvie, "he trusted you. And you repaid him—how? By marrying him—*you*—with the very name by which you called yourself not your own. It wasn't his money you wanted; you'd fixed yourself pretty well when you took that bit of Poland's revenue with you from Mrs. Pendergill's house party. So it must have been his name, the position he held among his fellows. Yes, yes, he trusted you, just as he believes in you now, with all his heart. You made an old man's loving faith a shield for your crimes——"

Involuntarily the girl raised her hand to her cheek. It seemed to her that the mark of a slap must be printed there—the scarlet of a wanton, tingling blow. In the ghastly pause some devil of mockery seemed to fill the room with an echo of her song: *"Close to the dying fire we sit alone——"*

"I think there's no more to say. In a few days I go up to town to report to my chief. The law will take up the matter, and the thief of Madame Jobinska's jewels will answer to it. My mission here is accomplished. Much regarding the case is unsatisfactory and unfinished, but I've done my best. I've made sure of your identity. I've learned that when Victor Carnastor married you, you were no simple girl cared for by two decent old people, but a *criminal* in hiding, just as they, too, notorious criminals, were in hiding."

He moved nearer, waiting for her to speak. The steady glow of the coals showed her as she crouched against her chair, a broken, softly colored heap, all flame and yellow, like a highly tinted chromo, against the somber background of the old room and its painted peers. She flung out her arms as a child tries to ward off a blow, and the bright, disheveled head sank; then she covered her face with her hands.

"Betty—Betty," he said—and neither noticed that he called her by a name not her own—"I give you my word that I am hurt through all my being by the necessity of delivering you, wonderful, lovable, vital as you are—I think I'm getting round to that other viewpoint by degrees—to that stern minotaur we call the law. I've had to fight myself all along to keep remembering—to remind myself that the charming personality of an apparently guileless young woman covered the character of Rose Dangerfield. At times I felt myself a cad as I saw the net closing slowly about you, and you so debonair and secure in your position, so childishly light-hearted and lovable. I even ceased to wonder at my old friend's infatuation. I——" His voice shook huskily, broke; and he went on, with an effort: "I've only done my duty, but Heaven knows I have none of that elation the doing of one's duty is supposed to bring. I'm as miserable as you."

He turned toward the door. Of a sudden he came back and stood before her, hands outheld.

"Look at me!" he commanded.

Slowly she got to her feet and waited, trembling through all her body. He seized her wrist.

"God knows I don't want to do you the slightest injustice. If there are mitigating circumstances—anything you could explain——"

The eager hope in his eyes died under the finality of her low answer:

"I—— There is no explanation."

"You don't deny that you are Rose Dangerfield?"

She bowed her head until it touched the yellow laces on her breast.

"I am Rose Dangerfield."

He dropped her arm, and recoiled. "And there's no explanation—nothing except the wretched environments of your youth—that would make the crime seem less bald? If there were, I should be glad. It all seems so horrible, so hopeless. *You*——"

With a sharp gasp, as of overstrained and breaking nerves, she slid to the rug, flung out groping hands along the chair in which he had sat, and hid her face from the red light on the hearth. She did not speak.

He went out and left her there alone, lying like a crumpled yellow rose upon his chair. The rain pattered on through the night hours; the darkness gathered yet more closely about the old Hall; the red coals died into ashes, and the great room grew cold and dim. Still the figure by the hearth had not stirred.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In his room, Herman Ogilvie sat at an ancient black-walnut escritoire, writing. His fingers shook as they wrote:

DEAR CRIEFF: The central figure in the Pendergill robbery turns out to be my lady of Boswell, after all, though I had no idea, when I came down, that such would be the case. She is—a bundle of contradictions. I almost find it in me to believe her the victim of circumstances. There, there—I'm not going to indulge in any of the sentimental regrets for which you've so often reproved me. Only—I've felt beastly like a bad boy chasing a white rabbit.

I shall be in town in a couple of days. Then I shall expect you to take this matter out of my hands. I'm *done with it*. It will leave me with a sort of spiritual bad taste for the rest of my days.

There are a few details some other man may work out, that I'll explain later. A little matter connected with the prison that I couldn't see into exactly. It was out of the line of evidence, anyway, my business being solely to establish her identity.

Suddenly the pen dropped, the paper swirled to the floor, and Ogilvie's head fell forward upon his extended arms. Over the place fell a silence as deep as that in the room below, where fire had become ashes.

A clock, striking somewhere, shattered the stillness—*one, two!* From his sleepless pillow Ogilvie counted the strokes. He wondered if he would ever be able to sleep. Wide-eyed, he lay listening to the maddening drip of the rain past his windows, and staring into the ghostly darkness of the room.

It had been hours, he thought, since he had first strained his ears for the sound of Mrs. Carnastor's footstep on the stairs, and he found himself wondering uneasily if she had come up without his knowledge. Surely she was not there, where he had left her, alone in that lonely room of shadows——

He caught himself up sharply. Why should he concern himself with her whereabouts? What matter to him where she passed the night? He had merely done his duty, as kindly as he knew how, and it was not—or should not be—a matter for regret. But in spite of himself, his mind went back over the days of their acquaintance. The winsome, impish personality mocked him from the coverts of memory. She had never been unwomanly, never exhibited any leaning toward the common or the coarse, revealed no evil taint that her parentage and upbringing might reasonably be supposed to have left upon her. And in his illness, how kindly and eager to help she had been—binding his broken arm with the skill of a professional; seeing to his comfort in the thousand little ways that a man loves; reading to him with inexhaustible patience; beseeching like a child to be taught of him; making herself both

nurse and companion, as few women could do.

She was an enigma—no dual personality, but the creature of a thousand moods and inconsistencies, interesting in them all. She was——

Abruptly he flung himself out of bed, partly to break the wretched train of thought that kept going round and round in a circle, partly to shut out the mental sight of her white, tortured face, the trapped look in the wide, begging eyes, the little outthrown, mutely beseeching hands. Bah! The girl was merely a clever actress; that was all.

He paced the floor, head bent, hands locked together. If she were that—merely a master mummer—why had she failed her rôle so ignominously at the end? Clever masqueraders are often able to carry out deception in the very face of exposure. *She* had made no such effort. The stinging lash of his contempt had withered the soul of her, stricken the ready tongue dumb. She had made no effort to defend herself. It was unlike all he had heard of her. She had escaped before by a clever ruse; why, at the last, had her wits deserted her?

And so the maddening circle of his thoughts went round and round, and he could not escape them. The hours dragged past, until the dawn, haggard and uncertain, peered over the rim of the hills.

He had thrown his weary length across the bed, and was dropping off to sleep, when a hurry of feet and voices of unwonted excitement stirred in the corridor outside. They came to him only as sounds come when imagined in a dream.

He thought once he heard a woman's sudden cry of terror, then frightened servants were speaking. But he only drifted deeper into his stupor of dreams, and it was not until an unfamiliar voice directly outside his door called to a servant with sharp peremptoriness that he sat up drowsily and looked about him.

The rain had stopped, and the clean sparkle of sunlight lay over everything. He drew in a long breath, got to his feet, still moving drowsily, and went toward the door.

Again that peremptory voice in the hall. He opened the door, and looked out in time to glimpse the retiring coat tails of a dignified old man in a high silk hat. Simultaneously with the disappearance of this personage appeared a servant—a hurrying servant with bulging eyes.

"What has happened?" demanded Herman of this apparition, who could only stammer:

"Mr. Carnastor——"

"Well, well, what of him?"

"He's very ill, sir—or leastways he —— They think——"

"Where is he?"

"In his bedroom, sir."

Ogilvie followed the man through the corridor and down a shallow flight of stairs that led into the apartments of the master of Boswell. The servant remained outside, but Herman entered noiselessly.

The scene that met him on the threshold of Victor Carnastor's sleeping room took him so wholly by surprise that he could only stand transfixed in astonishment. In the great carved bed, half in and half out of it, in a gray dressing gown, lay the figure of the old man. A glance at the limp hands and head, the inert body, the expressionless eyes, and the half-open, piteous mouth told him what had happened.

The white-haired old gentleman, instantly perceived to be a physician, was futilely attempting resuscitation. A group of helpless servants, to whom the doctor now and then gave sharp orders, hung around the bed with white, scared faces. The faithful Roberts, tears running openly over his cheeks, was chafing the old man's feet.

But all the sunlight in the room seemed to gather and focus on the figure thrown in terrible abandon half across the old man's body—a slender figure in a crushed dinner gown of buttercup yellow, with disheveled red hair making a sheen of color on the gray dressing gown.

"Now, Mrs. Carnastor, you must listen to reason," said the doctor. "Here, you!" indicating one of the frightened maids. "Take your mistress away. Don't you see, my dear, we can do nothing with you clinging to him like this?"

But she did not stir, and the old doctor looked worried within an inch of his life.

For Ogilvie there was a sort of unreality about the figures in the light, as if his stupor of sleep still held him. The sunshine, the silent figure on the bed, the hovering forms of the servants, the glinting yellow of the buttercup gown—it was as if he were watching a hastily staged play.

"It was his heart, I suppose, doctor?" sobbed Roberts. "He's often like had these same spells, and this time he didn't seem to suffer so much. He just went. There wasn't time to realize what was happening until——"

"Yes, yes, I know." The doctor waved them back. "You will please go now, Mrs. Carnastor. I'm sure you must see how important it is that I am not hampered." It was only out of solicitude for her that he added that last hopeful-sounding clause; well he knew that the figure on the bed had no need of him.

She stood up, swaying slightly. In the morning light she had the unreal, haggard look of the sleepwalker. Her physical fascination had lain most in the marvelous mobility of her features with their swift-changing expressions. Now, in the sunlight, the look of youth and faith gone, her wan face appeared old, tired, played out.

As she turned, still half swaying on her feet, she caught sight of Ogilvie. Her hands went to her head; some awful memory seemed to wake and burn.

"Go back!" she said thickly. "Go back! You shall not touch him!" She held out yearning hands over the inert figure, then suddenly crumpled beside him with hysterical outcries: "He is dead—*dead*—and he was the only friend I ever had!"

CHAPTER XIX.

The dreary day at last reached its close, and the quiet night came on. Over the Hall lay a great stillness, as if the rain-tossed gloom itself had formed into a pall for the master of the house. Now and then the hushed tread of a servant or a lowered voice struck softly through the darkness and the silence.

In his room Herman Ogilvie walked up and down, as a man walks when his brain is a seething tumult of unrest. Sometimes he stopped and listened, almost as if he expected to hear evidences of glowing life in the halls outside—the gay laughter of a woman's voice, the rapid click-click of high-heeled shoes, the swish of whispering skirts, the whole intense, vivid personality of the woman he had stricken down in an hour. She was ill, broken, alone. The old doctor prophesied serious results if the strain of her grief and shock continued.

He called it grief. Ogilvie found himself wondering exactly what an analysis of her present state of mind would produce. Grief, perhaps, for of late it had seemed to him that her response to Carnastor's tenderness had been very real; but, ah, the underlying cause of that broken-spirited collapse he alone knew. Until the old man whose trust and faith had never for a moment wavered lay at peace in the vaults of his ancestors, she was safe.

He would see to it that she did not escape during that time.

He found himself thanking Heaven that Victor Carnastor would never know what that "afterward" must bring forth.

Again to-night, as last night, he heard a clock somewhere striking—*one, two!* He sat up and listened. Sleep had not yet come to him, and his overwrought mind seemed to hear laughing voices that swiftly dropped to sobs in the air about him. He flung out of bed, breathing hard.

In the act of reaching for his dressing gown, he paused, arrested by a peculiar sound close at hand. Just outside his window was a balcony, around which age-old honeysuckle had climbed into a twisted barricade. Rope-thick strands reached from ground to balcony, thrusting themselves between the latticework like heavy, groping arms. Ogilvie could have sworn that he heard a rustling among the leaves. He waited, listening intently, trying to distinguish this sound from the dropping of the rain on the balcony roof.

It grew more decided; without a doubt some one was climbing to his window by aid of the honeysuckle. Now a soft sound directly outside told him that the some one had landed upon the balcony. As the wind carried the rain in another direction, this particular window was wide open, an invitation to any prowler who might be about.

In his blue silk pajamas, as exquisitely monogrammed as a fastidious woman's, the gorgeous dressing gown in one hand, Ogilvie stood quietly awaiting developments. They were not long in coming.

For a time there was a stillness in which he could hear his own heart beat. Then a black bulk appeared between him and the faint light of the window and began climbing over the sill.

Swiftly Ogilvie stepped back toward his bed and switched on the light.

To say that the two men confronting each other were astonished would be putting it mildly indeed. Ogilvie stood rooted in his tracks, staring at the slender, roughly clad figure of his visitor, with his shaven head and devil-may-care face, without uttering a sound. The man at the window gazed at the gentleman in light-blue silk as if he had suffered mental aberration and were conscious of the fact. He stood twisting his cap together in his thin, rather patrician hands, while Ogilvie clung unconsciously to his blue-and-gold dressing gown. Thus they faced each other in the sudden glare of light.

Then the newcomer gave a short laugh.

"Well, brother," he said, "I may as well confess that I'm in the right church, but the wrong pew."

At sound of the voice, low, lazy, well modulated—the voice of generations of culture—Herman Ogilvie started, and exclaimed, in amazement:

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"I might ask the same of you. It occurred to me quite forcibly when I encountered you just now, instead of ——" He broke off, and asked abruptly: "Just who the devil *are* you, anyway?"

"Sit down!" Ogilvie motioned him to a chair, crossed to the door and locked it, then brought down the window with a crash. The other man watched him with growing uneasiness.

"Mean business, do you, my friend? How do you know I haven't a weapon concealed somewhere about me?"

"That's all right." Mr. Ogilvie waved a blue silk arm in evidence of his unconcern at this dire threat. "We won't need it. But you're going to sit there quietly and tell me just why you come sneaking into honest men's houses after midnight by way of honeysuckle balconies."

Meeting the cool, intensely blue, amused eyes of the man in the chair, Herman found himself wondering if it were all a dream. There was so much savoir-faire in the stranger's manner, such deliberate insouciance, so real an undercurrent of respectful attention and reluctant admiration, cloaked by evident amusement at their plight, that he stood hesitating, sorely puzzled. Was the man a mere housebreaker? And if he wasn't, what, then, was he?

"Well, I'll promise to do that, since there's no other way out of it without making bad matters worse, but on one condition."

"That is——" asked Herman, impressed in spite of himself.

"That you tell me first just who you are. Oh, don't trouble to go into details—they'd probably bore me. The name'll be enough."

Ogilvie hesitated. After all, there was nothing to be gained by keeping his identity a secret, and nothing, as he saw it, to lose by revealing it. And when it was possible, he greatly preferred to strike from the shoulder. This man, as a glance had told him, was no ruffian; indeed, if he gauged him correctly, he was a foeman worthy of any man's steel. So he said simply:

"I am Herman Ogilvie."

"Herman Og——" The other interrupted himself with a long, low whistle of absolute amazement. "The devil you are! Ogilvie, the detective?"

"Yes," said the gentleman of the pajamas.

"Well, I must say! I'm the shrewd one, am I not? To go climbing straight into a fool detective's *window!* Mohammed and the mountain weren't a circumstance to this. Well, *amico mio,* the cat's out of the bag at last. I'm afraid I'll get badly scratched before she's done for. See here"—he leaned forward eagerly—"would it be asking too much if I wanted to know just what you're doing in this particular bit of the moral vineyard? Indefatigable sleuthhounds like yourself don't lie around on furloughs every change o' the moon. I wouldn't ask," he explained, with a peculiarly magnetic smile that made the gentian-blue eyes smile, too, "if it weren't very much to my interest to know."

This frank statement won a like reply: "I've been visiting my old friend Carnastor."

"Visiting? Honest to God? Just pottering around, going to picnics and musicales and making yourself pleasant in general with no ulterior motive?"

"Why," asked Herman, "do you think there'd be a motive?" But a certain evasive flicker of the eyes unexpectedly betrayed him—whose business it was to trap others.

The other lifted his brows, shrugged.

"Oh, I say, Ogilvie, don't try the ingénue on yours truly. I know you and your kind. A sneaking, underhand lot you are, too. I hate these puss-in-boots specimens of the genus homo who go keyholing about in the name of duty. But that's neither here nor there. What I want to know is just what you came to Panberry for?"

"You're an escaped prisoner, I suppose," said Ogilvie, ignoring the other's question.

If he expected his vis-à-vis to betray a startled wonder or any other off-guard emotion, he was doomed to disappointment.

"Why do you suppose?"

"Well, for one thing, you *look* it. You've got the prison pallor, and your head—— Then, too, you've a hunted sort of air—— Oh, it crops out in spite of you, at times. Though, to do you justice, I don't think you're caring very much about it, one way or another. You no doubt have a peculiar philosophy of your own."

"I have," agreed the other readily, "and it's this: When you're already in a corner, you're just as comfortable as

you'd be getting yourself into one. As I'm always in one or the other of these states of being, it's a philosophy that suits me to a dot. And the beauty of it," he explained confidentially, "is that it works both ways."

The singular convenience of this self-evolved philosophy was indisputable; but the listener let it pass with a nod.

"Do you mind telling me *your* name?"

"Divil a bit!" the stranger assured him, with an engaging air of having nothing to conceal. "I'm Alaric Cathcart. My people piously refer to me as 'the black sheep.'"

"Alaric Cathcart?" repeated the detective. "I don't think I ever heard of you."

"But you've heard of the Reverend Stirling Cathcart, of New Hope? Pretty well-known divine—one of the stilted, holier-than-thou sort, you know."

"Oh!" A vista of intelligence seemed to open to Mr. Ogilvie. "I see. You're the Reverend Cathcart's pet grievance. He was a friend of my mother's, but I'd forgotten your name, if I ever heard it."

"He's my uncle, you know. Sort of guardian, too."

"Funny I never saw you before," ruminated Herman.

"Nothing funny about it. He kept me pretty well in the background until I escaped his infernal piety and niggardly attentions. After that, I was much too busy to make acquaintances of your sort. When I wasn't busy, I was 'languishing behind the bars'—isn't that the way they put it?—planning what I'd do when I got out."

"Does the life particularly appeal to you?" Herman lifted questioning brows.

"Well, I say yes! Lots more, to my taste, than snooping round keyholes."

Mr. Ogilvie let this graceful tribute to his vocation pass unchallenged. "That brings us to the present," he said. "We've been merely skirmishing. If you've no scruples about making me your confidant, I'd like to know just how you escaped, and, most of all, why you came *here*."

"Wasn't 'here' as good a place as any, seeing that a deaf, sick old man and a healthily sleeping young woman were the only menaces, outside a fool lot of servants who'd fly the coop in alarm, leaving the field clear?"

Ogilvie shook his head. "That wasn't your reason."

Cathcart eyed him keenly. "On the level, do I have to tell you that? I'd rather not, if it's all the same to you."

"On the level," said Herman, smiling in spite of himself, "you don't. But I'd like awfully well to know. Sneaking in at windows is a less complicated accomplishment than listening at keyholes, but even so there is usually an incentive back of it."

"I wasn't sneaking," objected Cathcart pleasantly. "I was—er—searching for a friend."

"A particularly engaging way of looking up one's friends," commented Ogilvie. "Make a practice of it?"

"Well, yes, when it suits my purpose. Just as entering a house on false pretenses serves *your* purpose." The coolness with which this remark was uttered sent a hot, telltale flood over the detective's face. He hated himself for that involuntary flush, as he met the other man's keen, narrowed eyes.

"What do you mean, anyway?" he asked, a trifle angrily. "You had no pretenses of any kind with which to enter."

"Didn't I, though? Now, my friend, if you'll drop that superior air of yours and get down to bed rock and tell me exactly why you're here—that little yarn about visiting your friend Carnastor will do for the society column, but it don't go with me—blamed if I don't

sit right down and tell you the story of me life, same's they do in melodrama. Is it a go?"

Still smarting under that sudden access of color, the detective studied this new species of criminal without immediately answering. The blue, friendly eyes drew one like a magnet; more, they compelled. And with Mr. Cathcart's cheerful air of camaraderie, they were irresistible. The contagious good humor of the erstwhile cage man wore at Ogilvie's harness of cool superiority until he at length exclaimed, half laughing:

"What, then, am I to tell you?"

"Who is it," asked Cathcart, "that you're trailing, here in Panberry?"

"That I refuse to say."

"You are here," shot out Cathcart suddenly, "because *you know that Mrs. Carnastor is Rose Dangerfield!*"

If it was his trump card, he played it well. The laughter faded from the listener's lips, and Cathcart saw him change color. He half rose from his seat, put out a protesting hand, started to speak, then sat down blankly.

"Oh, you're not running this game all by your little lonesome," said the prisoner. "But I must say that I just now begin to see where your part of it comes in. I think I quite understand my lady's recent change of heart. You've etched some of your confounded 'high ideals' upon her with the corrosive acid of your personality. I'd come to-night to ask her about it, but there are more ways than one of getting enlightenment, now, aren't there? If she'd kept her promise, this little nocturnal conference of ours would never have happened."

"Her *promise?* What—what are you talking about?" stammered Ogilvie.

"Well, now, I'd explain that—honest, I would—if you'd confess like a man that you're here for the sole purpose of turning over to the law the wife of the old duffer who owns this particular joint. Tell the truth, just as man to man——"

In all his career, the dignified, well-bred, and immaculate Mr. Ogilvie had never been addressed in just such terms as these. He swallowed audibly, and an angry light flared up in the cool gray eyes, then died on the instant. Against this cheerful, matter-of-fact person he had no adequate defense.

"What makes you think that?" he asked calmly.

"I didn't think it until a few moments ago. But there's such a thing as adding two and two and getting four. I'm fairly observant, and I think I understand human nature pretty well. There was no harm in asking for the real facts, was there?"

"No. But what do *you* know about Mrs. Carnastor?"

"A good deal. But that isn't answering my question."

"If it must be answered," exclaimed Ogilvie in irritation, "that's exactly why I am here. Now will you tell me what you are to Mrs. Carnastor or she to you?"

"So you *are* after her! I see. Does she know it?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"Last night—only a few hours ago."

Again Mr. Cathcart gave vent to his emotion by whistling softly. "How'd she take it?"

"I—I don't know. She said very little, but tacitly admitted her guilt."

Cathcart paled a little. "Bully for her, then! She's made of the right stuff clear through. Never was another of her sex with so much *sand* in her." His voice softened. "She's all right—*all right!* I say, my friend, I often think of that chap who said the more he saw of men, the better he liked dogs. Men have the reputation of sticking to each other, and I guess they

do as a rule, but for pure, old-fashioned sacrifice refer me to a woman every time. Some kinds of women," he added thoughtfully.

One hand under his chin, he seemed to fall into a brown study. Ogilvie fidgeted in his chair.

"I say," said Cathcart suddenly, "I can't stand for this, don't you know? I'm pretty bad, but that's going it *too* strong. It'd be crowding the mourners to keep this thing up. The poor little weathercock, at least she knows what's due a friend. But I'll never let it happen again. The medicine may be a trifle bitter, but my stomach's as strong as hers. I'll play the man for once in my life, if it kills me.

"You see, I was expecting to find her without any difficulty to-night and make her a shield for my escape. She——" He broke off abruptly and sat staring moodily at the floor. After a while he went on: "I've made up my mind. I may be a bounder, but no woman shall go on forever trying to carry me on her shoulders. It was so deuced white of her not to tell the whole story to you last night that I'm going to do it. She shan't suffer through me again.

"Listen—do you remember the Haverhill forgery that set your profession agog? Well, *I* was the guilty party—I, Alaric Cathcart—no one else. Oh, don't stare! As you've said, we've both been 'skirmishing' in order to find out things long enough; now I'm going to settle down to business. Well, at that time Rose imagined herself desperately in love with me, and, in the midst of the excitement, she *confessed to the deed herself!* I had never been in prison, and I had a womanish horror of it. Of course I was an ordinary cad, too, for I let her stand trial. Her youthful charm and prettiness, and a clever ruse of her own, acquitted her. Meanwhile, I had kept quiet and waited. I give you my word, if the case had gone against her, I'd have squealed; I couldn't have let her take my punishment outright.

"Afterward, I was in a railway car with the girl and her father. Dangerfield was trailing an Austrian noblewoman who was either half-witted or beastly eccentric, for she outschemed her attendants and went about the country alone, incognito. She was in the car ahead, sitting democratically beside a day laborer—a little attractive wisp of a woman, not more than twenty-five, with a marvel of copper-colored hair.

"In an unfrequented part of the road the train jumped the rails and pitched down an embankment. Only the two last cars escaped; the others were simply eggshelled.

"When I saw Rose kneeling by the mangled body of the little Austrian, I hadn't a thought at the time except that there was a remarkable resemblance between them. Later, an idea popped into my head, and I revealed it to Rose. She must personate the dead woman; it wouldn't be difficult, for Rose was a clever mimic and could do anything under the sun she set her hand to.

"She protested, for it struck her as a brutal thing to do, and she had held that wonderful red head upon her knee and watched the life ebb from the unconscious body. But I urged her—told her I must have money in order to make over my life and take the even trail; and I was in earnest just then, too.

"At last she yielded, and followed my suggestions to the letter. At the great house where the Austrian was expected, she played her rôle with ease and finish. There was an opera singer there, too, with a bucketful of diamonds. Having ascertained this, I set Rose to cultivating an intimacy with this person. One night when a great lawn fête was in progress, I got a chance for a little second-story work

and made off with the 'swag.' I guess Rose was as much astonished as anybody when the news of the theft came out. About this time, however, a great hue and cry arose over the disappearance of the Austrian, and the masquerader knew that her game was drawing to a close and that it was only the matter of a few days before it would be all up with her.

"She did the only reasonable thing—quietly disappeared. She knew *how* to disappear, believe me. In all the uproar that followed, she remained as completely hidden as if the earth had yawned and swallowed her. The real culprits, Jock Dangerfield and I, were never mentioned in connection with the affair.

"It appears, however, that all the time she'd kept cognizant of my whereabouts, and when I acted the blooming fool and got myself run in for the second time for forgery, it nearly broke her heart. The women of her world, however, don't desert a lover merely because he shows himself a scoundrel. She set herself to aid me. She had been in out-of-the-way places, here and there, seeing her father occasionally; and when things began to get pretty hot for him, he dumped her in passing somewhere in Canada with two criminals who were themselves in hiding—old pals of his.

"There—she told me about this herself—she accidentally met and married a rich octogenarian who'd been taken seriously ill while on a hunting trip. Actually married him, knowing he could live but a few years at most, with but one end in view—to secure my freedom. Her subsequent nearness to the prison where I was confined gave her opportunity to visit me and plan for my escape."

During this astonishing recital Herman Ogilvie's face was a study. It went from white to crimson, from crimson to white. He sat rigid, painfully alert, staring, the blue-gray of his eyes deepened to black.

"She had no thought of self; her only idea was the liberation of the man she loved. One official she thought it safe to attempt to bribe; the others she felt to be invulnerable. This man was the guard, who was even coaxed into letting me into the grounds at night once or twice, where Rose and I talked cautiously together, ever hoping for a chance of escape. She came to me during the prison visiting hours, when it was possible, and was regarded by the old chaplain merely as a great lady with a fad for slumming. She let him think it, of course. If you know anything about her, you know how easy it is to believe black is white if she says so.

"I was to make my escape, and she was to follow me as soon as possible—or at least this was our vague plan of campaign. We never got much farther than the plan of escape, and I didn't encourage anything beyond it, for I couldn't well have afforded to have any woman tagging after me under those circumstances, now, could I?

"For a time all went well. Then—and this is the amazing part of the story, and something I can't make out—her feelings toward me gradually underwent a change. I seemed to have had a sort of glamour for her—the sort every man has, I suppose, for the woman who loves him. This appeared to fade, until I haven't a doubt that she saw me pretty much as I was. It was as if she'd had a new understanding presented her. It culminated a day or so ago, when I asked her if the old feeling was quite gone, and she replied: 'It was only an infatuation, wasn't it, Alaric? It isn't the same now; I suppose I have changed.' Furthermore—and, hang it all, this was what really mattered—she said that she had come to see that it would be wrong for her to liberate me; that it was wicked for

her to take my crime upon herself, shielding me in what was inherently evil.

"Heigh-ho! After this Christian Endeavor conference it looked as if all was up for me, for I was wise enough to see that it would be worse than useless to try to bring her back to my way of thinking. It was Thursday afternoon, and a few of the prisoners were in the corridor, where they were allowed on that day. We'd been talking together in a little bend of the hall, where the stairs curved down, and when she ran away abruptly, crying her heart out, I looked around to see the guard who'd had us in charge disappearing on some hasty errand around a corner.

"Well, before you could say Jack Robinson I'd squeezed myself into a tiny alcove under the steps that led into the basement, and down into this latter I tumbled in a hurry. I listened for a commotion, but none came. I haven't a doubt that the frightened guard, cautious lest the matter of bribery come to light, locked my door as usual and kept quiet as long as possible.

"When night came, I crept out into the grounds, and in the black darkness and the downpour of rain made a successful get-away. There was small use seeking Rose *that* night; my knowledge of her warned me that her mood was desperate. The keeper of the lodge at the Hall gates is old, deaf, and half blind and he lives alone. Well, he was dozing over his pipe, with a door or two open. I crept in and up the stairs, and, when all was silent, I went into a respectable little bedroom under the eaves and slept the sleep of the just.

"I stayed there, rather hungry and just a little anxious, until to-night. I counted on my lady's queer mood having changed to remorse by this time, and being hidden until the excitement had blown over and then helped in my escape. That brings us up to the honeysuckle 'adder and my début into your bedroom—the last thing I expected; and I will confess it has altered my original plan."

He turned about abruptly to face Ogilvie.

"But at any rate I think I have learned why Mrs. Carnastor came to a new viewpoint with such violence and finality. As one puts on the new love, the old suddenly loses its charm. She's *in love with you!*"

When the prisoner had cast this bomb, he waited for reply. None came. Apparently Mr. Ogilvie had been rendered speechless. But the quick, bewildered gesture with which he received it had not been lost to the other man's covert observation.

"You——" began the detective angrily.

"Oh, I wasn't born yesterday. And I understand women pretty well. I knew some alien force had been at work. I thought perhaps it was Carnastor himself or some of his fine women friends. But now—— I think I see."

He stood up suddenly.

"You've come here, Ogilvie, as a wolf in sheep's clothing. You won her confidence—*her love*—in order to destroy her. Well, if making off with a few sparklers can beat that for sheer cussedness, I'll own I'm wrong. You *cad*, you!"

There was no response. White-lipped, Ogilvie watched him, not even resenting the last forceful epithet.

"And after I'd found out what you were meaning to do, after you'd told me who you were and all that, I'd have been chopped into bits before I'd have permitted you to trap her and turn her over to the law under pretense of being her friend."

Slowly Ogilvie's color came back. The detective instinct had returned to

shake him out of silence. He looked at the other man with a quick sneer.

"You're mistaken in your charming little supposition. Mrs. Carnastor is of course not in love with me. That's a tawdry guess of your own. And this story you've just told—this plausible, interesting little effort—you hatched that, I suppose, on the spur of the moment to protect your accomplice. Turn about is fair play."

"I've told you the truth, so help me God!" said Cathcart. "I wouldn't have wasted my time on anything else. And Mrs. Carnastor is not my accomplice—would never have been if I hadn't had her wholly under my influence. She's worth a dozen such souls as you or I. She knows how to be loyal, at any rate, and you'd betray your grandfather, I haven't a doubt, if you thought it was your *duty*. Worst part of it, you'd think you ought to be lauded and given credit for your nasty treachery. I'm not saying *I've* had any new viewpoint; I know I let her bear my crime before, but I'll swear to you I never felt right about it, and if they had sentenced her, the truth would have come out in a jiffy. Now that she's decently situated in life, do you think I'll let her be dragged down without a word? I'm a devil, all right, but I never got *that* low. Think of all she's done for me—of all she's willing still to do out of a mistaken idea of loyalty!"

Ogilvie had recovered his composure, although he spoke a little unsteadily. He got up and went over to his desk.

"Will you come here," he said, and a new, vibrant note in the unsteady voice made Cathcart look up in surprise, "and *write* the confession you've just related?"

"Write?"

"Yes, yes—I want something more tangible than verbal statements."

"What do you mean to do with *me?*" asked the convict keenly.

"We'll talk of that later. You must write as fully as you've spoken."

"I don't mind, of course," said Cathcart, "but you've got to promise me you won't drag Mrs. Carnastor into this affair in any way."

Ogilvie turned on him bluntly.

"You're in love with her?"

Cathcart laughed.

"Bless you, no! The only love I ever had for any woman belonged to a boy-and-girl affair back yonder in the past. She died—thank the Lord! Even she might not have kept me straight; I don't suppose it was in me. And anyway I never had any hankering after the domestic stunt. 'Down to Gehenna or up to the throne, he travels the fastest who travels alone.' I wasn't in the least in love with Rose, but I honestly admired and respected her, and such a pal a man never had. She's one of those women who'll go the last ditch for a man she loves."

"She went the last ditch for *you?*"

Something in the tone made Cathcart lift his head. Suddenly a light seemed to break in upon him, and he shrugged amusedly.

"The last—— Oh, I see what you mean! No, indeed, no; not *that*. We were mostly good business pals, you see. I made love to her, of course, just to keep her at my heels, and she adored me—but it went no farther. I wouldn't have been fool enough to bungle things by complications of that sort, had it been possible. If that's what you're thinking——"

There was a pause; then Cathcart took up the paper, and for a long time there was no sound but the dripping rain and the steady scratching of his pen. At last he dropped it and leaned back in his chair.

"There you are, *Monsieur le Commissionaire*. And never forget that there is honor among thieves." He sighed, and straightened the fingers the pen had cramped. "Do you know,

Ogilvie, I'm thinking of a little poem called 'Black Sheep.' I read it once in a prison newspaper, and the words have never left me Do you mind if I repeat it?

"From their folded tents they wander far;
Their ways seem harsh and wild;
They follow the beck of a baleful star;
Their paths are dream-beguiled.
Yet haply they sought but a wilder range,
Some loftier mountain slope,
And little recked of the country strange
Beyond the gates of hope.

"And haply a bell with a luring call
Summoned their feet to tread
Midst the cruel rocks where the deep pitfall
And the lurking snare are spread.
Maybe, in spite of their tameless days
Of outcast liberty,
They're sick at heart for the homely ways
Where their gathered brothers be.

"And oft at night when the plains fall dark,
And the hills loom large and dim,
For the Shepherd's voice they mutely hark,
And their souls go out to Him.
Meanwhile, 'Black sheep! Black sheep!' we cry,
Safe in the inner fold;
And maybe they hear and wonder why,
And marvel out in the cold."

His wonderful voice, cadenced alluringly to pathos, regret, pain, and passion, as a violin is charged with swift-changing and exquisite harmonies, fell clearly in the silent room. The most soul-stirring of the Reverend Stirling's exhortations had never the tenderness, the sweetness, the grave appeal of this. Herman Ogilvie felt his throat tighten.

"Look!" said the convict, suddenly springing to his feet. "Only a little while until dawn. I mustn't be found here. And Mrs. Carnastor mustn't be disturbed. Moreover, I want no servants' gossip——"

He looked with questioning—a rather hopeless questioning, as if already he knew the decision and was ready to abide by it—at the other man, who stood with the written confession in his hand, eyes upon the floor. There was a long silence.

"Cathcart," said the detective at last, "I may be in the mazes of a bad dream and may wake up presently to find myself, the real Ogilvie, in bed, but the Ogilvie who's speaking now seems to have gained a new viewpoint for himself. *I'm going to help you escape.*"

Coming back, just as the dawn crept up cautiously, rose pink, lavender, and sheeny gray, across the brightening heavens, from the station where he had seen Cathcart, in all the glory of his —Ogilvie's—tweed garments, slouch hat, and monogrammed bag, board the first train that presented itself, the young man let himself in at a side door, out of which a sleepy servant had just emerged, and regained his room quietly.

In an utter upheaval of mind and spirit, he stood in the center of the room and looked about him. It had *not* been a dream, after all. It was true—and the convictions of thirty-five years seemed to have shriveled in the fire of the night's experience. He, Herman Ogilvie, son of his mother, not only allowing a self-confessed criminal to escape, but aiding and abetting him in it! Left with the problem of telltale prison garments, involving duplicity, concealment——

But what a criminal! Surely there was never any one like him.

He thought of the man in the drawing-room below, sleeping the deepest sleep that ever comes to man, and wondered why, though it had been at his tongue's end to mention his death to Cathcart—who in his hiding place had heard nothing of it, just as Mrs. Carnastor, ill and alone in her room had heard nothing of the escape of the convict—he had kept silence. Was it because he feared that Cathcart might attempt out of pity for her plight to see her, and thus bring on fresh complications?

He sank heavily into a chair and leaned back. A paper crackled softly

against him. He took it from his pocket and sat for an hour gazing at it without stirring—Cathcart's confession exonerating the woman who had loved him.

CHAPTER XX.

Miss Allardyce was having one of her endless "at homes." It was a particularly Novemberish afternoon, with banked-up clouds and scudding winds. The rooms were exquisitely lighted and warmed, and great masses of hothouse flowers, heaped here and there, sent out entrancing odors. The place held the charm of shifting colors as the throng of guests moved in and out.

Mrs. Carnastor sat obediently behind the tea urn. She had been with Miss Allardyce over a year, ever since her husband's funeral, and the kindly old woman had been unremitting in her efforts to awaken in the subdued young widow a little of the old Betty Carnastor's vivid interest in life. She had been told the whole tragic story, and she had shrewdly drawn her own conclusions as to the part Herman Ogilvie had unconsciously played in it. Neither of them had heard from him since the day when he had left Boswell Hall, with no other farewell to his hostess than a short note in which he had told her of Cathcart's confession and escape. Mrs. Carnastor never spoke of him, but her old friend had a strong suspicion that his silence had a great deal to do with her listlessness and pallor.

On the present occasion she had been persuaded to put aside her depressing black garments, and wore something filmy and white with little silver threads shot through it; and with a wreath of laurel leaves in her shining hair, she somehow suggested a nymph or a dryad. She looked rather distrait and out of it all, though the drifting groups appeared to hold for her a certain interest. Now and then, as they left her for a moment unoccupied, she leaned back and watched them through half-closed eyes.

A rather noisy party, bringing in a breath of the November air, drew most eyes to the door. Madame Dahlia at that moment, whether by accident or design it cannot be said, looked across at the young woman behind the tea table, and saw a veil, as it were, lifted from Mrs. Carnastor's face. She leaned forward in her chair, lips apart, with a strange new brightness in her expression, her soul shining for a moment in her waiting eyes.

Then the shimmering violet figure of his hostess crossed the room and bore down upon Herman Ogilvie, who was leisurely making his way toward her. She was, like Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast, substantial smile.

"My *dear* boy! So good of you to come. Really I don't know that I expected you at all, in spite of my letter; one sees so little of you. Come over and get a cup of something hot. It's abominable out of doors, isn't it?"

She laid a hand on his arm and began to pilot him through the crowd. No one watching them would have said that there was passing through the lady's mind anything more serious than an echo of pleasant welcome. But her thought was: "If he cared, he certainly has not pined away. And yet there's a change somewhere that I can't exactly define. Perhaps I may be able to later. Of course, if he *did* care, he has been undergoing a most terrific struggle with himself."

She looked at him keenly as they stopped directly in front of the tea table and he became aware of the white figure back of it.

"I suppose you know that Betty is with me for the season? She and I have been tagging about together for ages—perfect ages. Will you give the stranger a cup of tea, darling?"

If the interested chaperon of Victor

Carnastor's widow had expected to unearth divers puzzling problems through the medium of this well-planned meeting, she was doomed to disappointment. Not so much as the flicker of an eyelash betrayed either of the two as Ogilvie greeted the woman he had last seen in piteous abandon beside the body of her dead husband. She gave him his tea with a charming, rather indifferent smile, chatting inconsequently of impersonal things.

He had known, of course, that she was with Miss Allardyce, he said, and had meant to drop in some time when he could be sure of finding them at home; but he had been tremendously busy——

"Dear me!" said his hostess. "And also, alas! Herman, will you never learn to dissemble? Nice men don't plead business when they avoid their friends—such friends as Betty and I, at any rate. Though you were right about being uncertain as to finding us in. Really"—she threw out an arm in a comprehensive gesture—"the child has had enough attention to turn any feminine head. A proposal every other day, upon my word! As for counts and lairds—we sweep them off the steps every morning! Every time one opens the door, a lovesick swain tumbles in."

"Really!" said Mr. Ogilvie. "Well, I must be getting on. I only looked in for a moment. Shall I drop around some afternoon when you've nothing particular on hand?"

"Do," said Miss Allardyce cordially. "Thursday, if you like. That is, if you're sure you aren't too tremendously busy," she added, with a grim smile.

A vapid young man with the sort of grin one wears when one feels the camera focused upon one came up at this moment, and with a languishing look and a too-obvious compliment begged for a cup of tea.

Mr. Ogilvie moved on, with a word of adieu, and though Miss Allardyce had the pleasure of seeing the line between his brows deepen, she had not quite the intuition to perceive whether it was caused by the vapid young man or by Mrs. Carnastor's courteous indifference.

Presently, drifting back to the tea table, the violet lady observed casually:

"Herman isn't quite up to the mark, is he? Looks a trifle seedy. I suppose he's been overdoing himself in his *profession.*"

"That's quite possible," was the careless response. "But he seemed to me to be looking quite well. Two lumps. Mrs. Gerald?"

CHAPTER XXI.

On the Thursday afternoon he came, just as the lemon-colored city lights began to glow out of the foggy gloom. It was a wet, leaden day, heavy with impending storm. In the big drawing-room velvet curtains, long and straight and somber, shut out the dull twilight. At the piano Mrs. Carnastor was dawdling over the keys, now and then humming softly, while Miss Allardyce, a book between her negligent fingers, sat in a deep leather chair where the fire in the broad grate illumined her and caused wonderful vermilion and crimson lights to dance over her.

Ogilvie stood for an instant on the threshold, looking in at the pretty, homelike scene. The room was warm, sweet smelling, shadowy. On a table near by a bowl of Parma violets sent out a heavy, heady odor, not unlike the exquisite scents of spring.

With a little sigh Miss Allardyce laid aside her book, got to her feet, and saw him there. She hurried to him with outstretched hands.

"You see, we *are* at home—quite a happening these days. Will you sit here before the fire? Betty has been singing to me, and, I declare, I was a thousand miles away in thought."

Then Mrs. Carnastor turned and saw him, and, after the first little start of emotion quite past her control, greeted him with a quiet smile and a hand-clasp. He was looking rather more "seedy" than on the day of the "at home," and slightly ill at ease.

"Dreamer of dreams," he said, smiling, "what have you been seeing in the coals—past, present, or future?"

"Past, to be sure," said Madame Dahlia. "What else is left for an old woman? Herman, this foolish Betty thinks she's tiring of the social whirl, and she wants—think of it!—to go back to Panberry."

In the firelight, somehow reminiscent of that last night at Boswell, he saw the younger woman flush rather painfully.

"You needn't mind saying it again, my dear—that the life I've lived for seventy years bores you unbearably. If I'd anything worth while in me, I'd be bored, too. I rather like you the better for it. But, ye gods and little fishes—*Panberry!*"

Herman laughed at the horror in her tone. Mrs. Carnastor said nothing, evidently for fear of saying too much.

"It's either that or travel for her. I told her, if she liked, we'd spend Christmas in Bethlehem, and the idea rather appealed to her. She really does want to see Egypt, too—who doesn't? The last time I was there I came very near marrying a sheik."

They laughed together, and the conversation switched to generalities. They talked of things detached from themselves—the latest successful play, the newest novel, the most recent celebrity.

"Betty, my dear," said the mistress of the house, "kindly give me my cigarette case from the table." She took the jewel-monogrammed trifle, extracted a cigarette, lit it, and puffed away placidly. She was secretly delighted at the quick line of disapproval she saw gathering between Ogilvie's eyes. She was thinking how incredibly like his mother he was.

"You've been rather successful in your—er—profession, haven't you?" she asked. "Why didn't you let your friends know you'd taken it up?"

"Well," he said seriously, "I didn't know but I'd be a dismal failure at it. I wanted to make sure of myself. And—I never have."

"What! Never become sure of yourself?"

"No. I doubt if I ever shall. One is so apt to make mistakes, you know." Was he whipping the devil of his misjudgment of Betty over her shoulders, she wondered.

"Do you know," he said, "that one of my fellow workers was forced the other day to admit that he'd made a mess of his efforts? He sent to prison two innocent men. Of course, he was sincere, and the circumstances warranted it, but when the truth came out later, he admitted that he was plain discouraged. There's enough suffering and misjudgment in the world without forcing it on innocent men and women."

In her chair before the fire, bathed in its warm, red glow, elbows on her knees and chin propped in the hollow of her hands, Mrs. Carnastor sat looking into the heart of the flames, singularly silent.

"Herman, my dear child," said the older woman, with a sigh, "the world is an old one, of course, and things are going on pretty much the same when we're out of it. If one has made a mistake and can rectify it, one's duty is plain; if one can't, one should forget it without loss of time. Of all the undesirable chasms into which the human soul may tumble, that of morbid introspection is the worst."

Later, when Mr. Ogilvie rather reluctantly took his departure, Madame Dahlia pressed his hand warmly. "I suppose we shan't be seeing you again,

dear boy," she regretted, "since we're leaving so soon for Bethlehem, and after that, in all probability, the uttermost ends of the earth. That interesting *profession* of yours no doubt leaves you small margin for social amenities."

And she had the satisfaction of feeling the hand clasping hers tremble ever so slightly.

"Why did you tell him that?" The voice was wearily impatient. "You know, lady dear, I'm not going to Palestine with you. I thought we'd thoroughly threshed out that subject. And it isn't that I don't want to go, and that you aren't everything that's lovely and kind, but—they really need me at Panberry."

"Bah! You're as bad as Herman himself. Why do you think a lot of ignorant, dirty tenants and villagers need *you?* What are Victor's agents doing for their bread and butter?"

"Not much, according to accounts. I've heard that last epidemic of typhoid came from bad drains. Oh, I suppose they do what they are expected to do; but they regard the thing from the wrong point of view. When they let the tenants suffer leaking roofs and bad drains, they think it's economy—and never count the toll of human life. I'm going to make the place over and see that every cottage belonging to the estate is made habitable."

Miss Allardyce sighed.

"This sort of life, lady dear, is all very well in its way, but what does it accomplish? One seeks pleasure for oneself, but what of the millions who have no pleasures?"

"So you mean to be your brother's keeper?"

"No, not that. The blind can't lead the blind. I'm unworthy of the high rôle of keeper. But I've known much of the under side of things, and I can understand—the under dog."

Dahlia Allardyce sighed again.

"How do you propose to spend your time in Panberry? There'll be seven days in the week there."

"I shall be planning cottage improvements and better ways of tilling the soil, and holding weekly meetings with my tenants' wives to find out how much they know and how little I've learned, and reading them all I can find on the proper rearing of children——"

"Hold!" cried the lady of the house, collapsing into the leather chair. "I can't seem to mentally digest all that at once. It sounds so mortally like——" She stopped, with a gasp. "I hope, my dear," she finished meekly, "that you'll find your métier and be quite, quite happy."

She sat staring into the coals for a while; then she got up slowly, a little stiffly.

"I shall miss you, my dear," she said, all her thwarted motherhood in face and voice.

Mrs. Carnastor, who had been Rose Dangerfield, put her face down upon the arm of her chair and sobbed.

An hour afterward as, with candle in hand, Miss Allardyce went up to bed, she remarked to herself: "It's fortunate she didn't press that first question of hers about Herman. I *wanted* him to think we were going out of his reach. When one is so *dense*——" She toiled a few steps farther, and added: "He's had his bit of hell, too, I'm thinking."

With which cryptic utterance she entered her room and closed the door.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was snowing heavily outside, and the world swayed white in a blowing wind. Outlines took on a blurred uncertainty, then gradually were lost altogether as the somber night shut down. Only the Hall showed its massive bulk steady in the drifting curtain of white. The curtains were partly drawn, and

the wonderful warm, red glow of the wood fire in the old drawing-room crept out into the night, through the sheen of tossing snow. There was no other light in the room.

The man trudging up through the white silence of the tree-garlanded avenue paused near the old house and looked up at the firelit windows. They framed the interior of the room, and after a time his snow-blinded eyes made out that some one had entered it alone. The slender figure of a woman stood before the fire, spreading out thin hands to the blaze. The face was turned from him; he wondered what expression it wore.

She moved out of his vision, and he heard, a moment later, crashing, fretful chords that rose into a lament. Then, as he stood hesitating in the snow, some one began to sing. He heard the voice only faintly through the thick walls, but even so it was not hard to distinguish the unutterable sadness of it—vibrant, sweet, with an ineffable, melancholy tenderness, an unprotesting acceptance of inexorable fate.

Herman Ogilvie let himself in at the entrance without aid of the knocker, and found a servant sprawled, open-mouthed in slumber, in the hallway. No one had heard him enter, and in the room the voice went on softly singing.

He never knew how long he stood there, longing to speak, yet unable to stir. It was not until the music softened and almost the echo of a whisper reached him that he tore himself free from his strange trance of hesitancy and moved toward the door.

"Night, and the curtains drawn,
The household still——"

A great wave of feeling rose within him. He stood near the curtained doorway and looked into the room. She was there—at the end of the long, dim place, before the old piano, the firelight on cheeks and temples and shoulders, as on that other night of stress and suffering—in the same room, with only the light from the flames now, as then.

The man in the shadow moved toward her. At the sound of his footsteps she turned slowly about and saw him there in the half light of the fire, all the inward struggle of the past year written plain upon his face.

She had risen to her feet, startled, white, shaken, almost retreating before him, who might be a wraith born of the snowy night and her own pain and longing.

"Betty!" he breathed, and his whisper seemed to echo through the lonely house. *"Betty!"*

With that low breathing of the little alien name a quick trembling seized the girl, and involuntarily she put both hands over her face to shut out the revelation of his eyes. An arm, groping, touched her, drew down the shielding hands.

"I love you!" said the man passionately, tremulously. "Heart of my heart, *forgive me!*"

She felt her hands trembling in his, her heart beating like a mad thing in her breast, but she lifted her head and looked at him, as if to understand aright what he had said.

"You—*you*—love me?"

"Didn't you know, then?" he said. "I've been a fool—a poor, blind fool. My God! And I doubted *you!*"

Incredulous, exalted, ecstatic, she yet drew back. "It's a dream," she whispered. "It must be only a fancy of the lonely night. You—and I thought——"

"Do you love me?" he breathed, his quick breath on her cheek. "Do you love me? My sweetheart, my wife—answer me."

"I thought," she said slowly, "that

you despised the thing I was; a pretender, a——"

"Dear love——" he protested brokenly; but she stopped him.

"I'm unworthy," she murmured piteously. "I was only a pretender. I have suffered. You opened my blind eyes, and I saw—my own soul."

But he interrupted masterfully: "Yours were not the only blind eyes in the world. Tell me that you love me, beloved—that's all that matters."

And her low voice was like a cry: "Love you? I'd give my life for you! If I could tear my heart out, I'd put it in your hands. I love you, love you, love you——"

His hands dropped hers, and were upon her shoulders about her throat. He turned her face toward him, and his lips were on hers. In the still delirium of that moment the darkness and struggle of the past months were blotted out, and earth swam golden in the snow silence of the December night.

Heart upon heart, there broke over them wave after wave of that great sea of the soul that is mighter than earthly waters, and they were lifted by it, borne from the firelit room into a land that is visioned only of love.

It was the woman who remembered. When she had withdrawn herself from his arms, she drew still farther back and looked at him as if he had been a stranger.

"I—I am *my father's daughter*——"

"If you were the daughter of a hundred criminals," said Herman Ogilvie, "it would make no difference. I would drag you out of the gutter and carry you to the altar in my arms, if there were no other way. I love you with the whole of my being, all there is of me with which to love. It is you yourself I love, you brave, sweet, wonderful woman! What lies back of you is no concern of ours. Did you think I'd go on remembering the things that hurt you? Oh, my dear! My very, very dearest dear!"

It was not until later, when connected speech became possible, that there came upon him the memory of a certain debonair gentleman with eyes like blue speedwell blossoms bathed in sunshine; and after the manner of lovers from time immemorial, he must inquire into this particular aspect of the past.

"You didn't love him," he said, with conviction.

"Perhaps—— Yes, it was love, I'm sure of that—of a kind. I hadn't met you. If I hadn't known you, I might have gone on loving him—— No, no, I couldn't when *you* were somewhere in the world!"

He smiled at the foolish, woman's logic. "Even so, you were mine. I would hold you against all the world."

He drew her toward a great chair before the fire, and softly forced her to the rug at his feet, her head against his knee. In the stillness they heard the snow beating against the windows.

"I have dreamed of this," he said in scarcely more than a whisper. Then he stirred, sighed, and the hand that lay upon her head moved restlessly. "I, too, have suffered," he told her.

She turned her lips to his hand, and he saw that her eyes were shining with tears in the firelight. He drew her closer, and after a moment he went on: "All during the lonely months after I went away, after that bitter night in this room"—he looked about it rather unsteadily—"your image followed me everywhere. I left you a little crumpled heap—utterly alone. I had hurt you horribly——"

"Hush!" Her hand was on his lips. "That's over and done with, one of the things to forget. There's no past for us; there's only a future."

They sat once more in silence, until the hunger of his voice appealed again: "Darling?"

"Yes?"

"Nothing—I just wanted to say it. My darling—mine! I love you. There isn't anything else."

She drew her hand from his clasp and fumbled in the bosom of her gown. When she held up the thing that had lain against her heart, he looked at it, wondering. It was a crumbling spray of flowers.

"The day you were hurt," she half whispered, "when I bound up your arm, this little spray of buttercups fell on my hand. It was warm, crumpled—I —I've kept it since."

Then she felt herself drawn up into his arms and held close against him, while he murmured inarticulate, beautiful, unforgettable things. He, Ogilvie, the contained, moved to emotion such as this! With a gesture of infinite tenderness, she drew his cheek close to hers, and, feeling his tears upon it, could not speak.

The firelight lifted to a shimmering, scarlet radiance that died down as swiftly as it had flamed; the coals crashed, crackled, fell apart, settled to a dull glow, and the room grew dim and still.

BEAUTY

I HAVE seen a tall ship moving under sail,
Bending and dipping with a white lace at her throat.
I have seen the naked sea go swinging to the sun,
And the moon in the heavens like a little silver boat.

I have seen a red rose blowing in the vale,
Yearning like a scarlet bird upon a prison stem.
And I have seen a forest pool, with heaven in its heart,
And a lily on its bosom like a single snowy gem.

But the rare, bare beauty of the naked sea,
Ships in their progress, and the stately, dipping sail,
Heaven caught and crumpled in the silver of a pool,
Moon upon the twifight, rose within the vale——

These are but the practice of the Master's hands,
Lutes He tried before He swept the final perfect string,
You, my heart, are all of these, their summing and their crown,
The water cleanth, the grace of ships, the rose without a wing.

Kneeling at thy threshold, here I set my lamp!
Rising and thrilling to the laughter of thy charms,
Lord for but a heartbeat of the moon, the rose, the sea,
I take the sweet of all the world into my raptured arms!

DANA BURNET.

A WOMAN THEREFORE



BY ELEANOR FERRIS

"WELL, I've had some babies—three hu'derd an' ninety-three!" boasted Mrs. Thad cheerfully. "No doctor half the time, neither. So I guess I'm the one to answer this hurry call, even if 'tis Noah's flood an' a cyclone 'tween here an' the carry."

Complacently bustling, she jabbed a brass-headed hatpin through an uneasy straw hat at an angle above her perpendicularly done hair, her bright, round eyes scanning the chalet kitchen for needed articles for the pack basket that Thad was stuffing under her orders.

"Stick that hot-water bag in a soft place, not to bu'st it, an' git your fish scales, Thad. Nothin' to weigh the poor young one, like enough, when he gits born."

Her spouse creaked off to obey.

Elizabeth Ford, in slim, graceful black, stood in the doorway and watched her housekeeper, cook, and philosopher fly about deedily, eager to revert to her chosen calling of country nurse.

"S'pose I am loony 'bout babies," Mrs. Thad admitted. "But I hate to leave you alone, Miss Lizbeth. You'll be wishin' you'd brung your reg'lar city help, like your ma useter, 'stid o' lettin' Thad an' me do for you." She pinned her full skirt up to her knees with a brave display of obsolete petticoats. "Seems 's if I had to go—the poor young thing took before her time an' this flood cuttin' off nurse an' doctor——"

"Of course you must go," Miss Ford assured her. "Though I'm far from loony about babies myself." Her lips smiled, but her young eyes were always sad. "You know that a new baby looks more like a wrinkled, fattish chestnut worm——"

"That's just your talk!" said Mrs. Thad comfortably, with the freedom of one who had always worked for "the Fords" in camp. "You 'ristocrats like to make out you don't feel. But, after all, you're a woman." Mrs. Thad's apple cheeks flushed with leaning down to button her shoes. "Bein' a woman is just the meanest thing in the world—an' the grandest!"

As she stood in the window of her Adirondack chalet, when the Thads had driven off in the sagging buckboard through the pine and white-birch woods between the camp and the lashing lake, Elizabeth was doubting the truth of Mrs. Thad's philosophy. A woman's life was loving—and losing. When her mother had died, leaving her alone in Egypt, soon after her only brother had been drowned, Elizabeth, in her desolation, had determined to escape from well-meaning comforters who did not comfort, to devote herself to music, and never to care greatly for any one again; so she would spare herself new sorrows. Solitude in the woods was what she craved.

However, to be thus stranded alone, in a big wind that made the lake impassable, with floods cutting off wires and bridges, to be cookless and guideless, all because an improvident woman had chosen to have an infant on a remote Adirondack carry, was quite intolerable. In the abstract, of course, she pitied the woman, but personally she was sorry for herself.

She went to the piano, but her "Woods Symphony" seemed futile to interpret the high burden of the storm. Thad was to have returned to cook luncheon. When three o'clock had not brought him, Elizabeth ate a tough shredded cereal and was low in her mind.

Darkness had shrouded the spring-veiled birches before Thad's step on the veranda heralded food and a revived fire. He had waited, doubtless, to bring his wife, whose hot pop-overs—— But he entered with his pack basket, alone, forcing the door shut again against the wind.

"Whew!" he panted. "It's a fierce night to be born in!"

"Where is your wife?" demanded Elizabeth. "Couldn't they get a——"

Thad gingerly set the pack basket on the white bear rug before the hearth. Standing on the stones, not to drip on the rugs, he took off his soft hat and from it produced a folded paper which he held out to Elizabeth. She read the penciled scrawl:

> Dere miss Lizb. she's awful bad i cant git away. the Baby is most a blew one but you kin pul him thro. Respt.
>
> mrs. Thad Tubbs.

In consternation Elizabeth looked up, to behold Thad cautiously lifting a corner of the rubber blanket covering the basket top.

"There!" he whispered proudly. "Ain't stirred a hair!"

Leaning to see what he had captured, she drew back aghast.

"Why did you bring it here? I know nothing about long-clothes babies! Why——"

Thad was evidently abashed by her lack of enthusiasm.

"Poor little kid!" he muttered defensively. "Never turned a hair, all the way!"

"Not that it has a hair to turn!" Elizabeth gazed ruefully at the little fuzzy head and bluish, wrinkled, tiny face in the basket. "When is your wife coming? I cannot—— Isn't the doctor ——"

"Doctor may git thar by mornin' if the river goes down. No train is through; bridges is down—— My, but it's a storm!" finished Thad limply.

Obviously unable to cope with a woman who was not "loony about babies," he jerked his head to the fire and spat once, neatly and explosively, as the only relief to the situation; then looked apologetic.

"Seems the lady come here early—soon as the ice went out—for her cough. Took the cabin on the carry. Had just a nigerant girl, Mag says, who went to see her folks to Malone—no tellin' when she can git back now. Mag's hands is full with the mother. 'Most any woman'd do fer the kid—poor woman, I mean," Thad explained. "They do it sorter by instinct, I guess."

"Oh, I *can* do it, of course," said Elizabeth loftily.

Her instinct was as good as another's, if it came to that. Much as she loved children who had achieved personality, she had never been enthusiastic over unfinished specimens, as she considered those under six months, and in her detached existence, traveling as she had for her mother's health in many lands, she had never been intimately thrown with small babies either by choice or circumstances. This one seemed quite superfluous.

"Poor little biological embryo!" she murmured, with a baffled look. The little face in the basket screwed con-

vulsively. "Can you get supper, Thad? We can leave it here like a papoose, I suppose, while it sleeps. Or aren't its eyes opened yet?" she asked wisely.

Thad's long mouth twitched at the corner, though he kept his tone respectful.

"Guess you're thinkin' of kittens," he suggested.

Whereupon, the infant lifted up its voice and feebly wailed its protest against the ignorance and flannel surrounding it on every hand. From then it wept feebly, persistently and nerve-rackingly; wept in the basket and out of it, wept while taking milk through a medicine dropper and while refusing it, wept while being rocked and while being left alone.

For hours Elizabeth walked the floor of the birch-bark-paneled bedroom, the dark cloud of her hair floating behind her. With heavy eyes and weary arms she soothed the baby, crooning through set teeth! Sentimental fallacies as to the charms of tending the new born might appeal to expectant mothers; Elizabeth Ford could tell the bald truth about it from that night.

Not until dawn did she rest, when, after again heating a little milk and pouring some inside, but more outside, the infant throat, at last she lay down, with the baby like a squirming hot-water bag on her chest. A tiny claw closed around her finger, the wee body slipped into the curved hollow of her breasts. She dreamed that the baby was hers and that she loved it.

The next morning beside the fire, she made up her mind to bathe the child. The function must in itself be simple, she argued, though made elaborate by doting mothers and overtrained nurses. She unswathed the uncertain anatomy and gazed with misgiving on the clutching wee hands, the updrawn knees, the wabbly neck. Then, catching the tip of her tongue between her even teeth, as her way was in tense moments, she lifted the baby suddenly in cool, firm hands and plunged it into the tub. Like an eel, the little body slipped from her hold, and in the instant before she could grasp it, the child turned black in the face. When it was again smothered in blankets on her lap, and by a miracle undrowned, she determined to let it go unwashed till Mrs. Thad should arrive, however long that connoisseur in babies might be delayed.

"Heaven send her soon!" groaned the distraught foster mother, as she mopped the fuzzy head with her finest handkerchief, reassured, yet made frantic by the young protestant's wails against further ordeal by water.

With new patience she soothed and crooned and cuddled, till quiet prevailed when Thad tiptoed in to say that his potatoes were fried fit to eat. She held up a warning finger.

"Look!" she whispered. "That little real yawn—just like a—a person!" she marveled.

"What else is he?" asked Thad naïvely.

But with that yawn, the biological specimen achieved personality. Elizabeth never again called him "it."

As her changeful gray eyes brooded over the helpless burden, utterly dependent on her, nestling in her arms, Thad looked at the enforced Madonna, wondering,

"A baby's awful becomin' to you!" he blurted at length, and, embarrassed, tiptoed from the room.

Surrounded by an unmanageable accumulation of milky glasses, cold hot-water bags, towels, medicine droppers, and thermometers, which she had used at random, the fastidious Miss Ford wearily held the intermittently sleeping and weeping infant, and realized the truth of the Scripture that one day could be as a thousand years.

Thad, tending the fire, would remark: "My, that kid does keep it up, an' us feedin' him constant!"

Perhaps too "constant"! Elizabeth wished it were not all guesswork, both as to quantity and quality.

At length the dusk brought Mrs. Thad in the sagging buckboard; Mrs. Thad worn with her hopeless efforts—for she had felt from the first that the young mother must die—yet with the indomitable primitive turning from the life gone out to the new life to be nurtured.

"Yes, she's dead. I laid her out lovely. How's the young one?" she demanded in one breath. She looked the bawling infant over as he lay on Elizabeth's knees. "Well, you're wore out with him. Kep' it up like that right along, has he?" She tied an apron about her expansive waist.

"Oh, no, not all the time. He has slept in my arms sometimes," Elizabeth defended the infant disposition. "Once to-day he smiled at me. He is beginning to know me a little, I think," she added seriously.

"Sure!" Mrs. Thad beamed. Not till long afterward did she voice her conviction that the smile of a two-days-old babe is "wind on the stummick." Now she only moved about with the surprising quiet of a competent fat person, putting the pretty room in order.

"Sure he knows you," she repeated comfortably. "An' he'll know you better 'fore you're through with him, I guess. Little tike don't seem to have no relations to speak of. Father's civil engineerin' down in South America." Her voice was skillfully monotonous as Elizabeth gave her the quieted baby to be "done up" properly in the garments brought from the carry. "Not very handy, your pa ain't!" She addressed the embryo male as if challenging him to defend his sex.

"The man must be perfectly heartless," Elizabeth broke in, "to leave his wife when——"

"Didn't know she was expectin'," explained Mrs. Thad. "She wouldn't tell him, she said, for fear he'd throw up his gov'ment contrac' tunnelin' the Andes, or some little stunt like that. Poor lady, she prattled on, in a weak little voice, how she was crazy 'bout dress an' dancin', an' her husband had to make a fortune 'cause his father was only a colonel in the army an' hadn't left nothin', an' he made her mad refusin' city contrac's 'cause of too much graft in 'em. She wanted money, an' she didn't want a baby—never did. Her father was a poor country minister. She had no folks livin'. Poor, pretty, silly child she was! There!"

Mrs. Thad flopped the baby over miraculously, without his opening an eye. Elizabeth watched her appreciatively, almost with envy.

"Yes, siree!" went on the monotone. "Your pa's a man of some sense, I jedge from what she said *against* him! She come up here, so's nobody'd see her after she lost her figger, thinkin' the woods might help her cough. She was goin' to the hospital next week, but nothin' c'ld have saved her—doctor says so, too," finished Mrs. Thad. "Now he's writ to the father. But there'll be no hearin' from the back of South America, nobuddy knows when. I don't know what *to* do!"

"You want me to say it is up to you, Mrs. Thad," laughed Elizabeth. "But of course," she added soberly, "for the present we must take care of the small interruption that fate has dropped at our door."

When, after several weeks, came the cable, answering the doctor's letter, it read:

> Impossible to leave my post. Government contract. Give child in care some good, sensible woman in neighborhood.
>
> JOHN HAVILAND.

"That means me," said Mrs. Thad.

"That means me," said Elizabeth in chorus.

"From the way the youngster takes the whole time of the camp, not allowin'

for fishin', I guess it means the whole of us," Thad decided.

But from the first he was Miss Lizbeth's baby; his tiny hands reached up, claiming the lady of the chalet as his own. And she, ignoring her futile resolution to escape sorrow by not loving, prostrated herself before the baby's shrine.

The country doctor and Mrs. Thad were supplemented by a specialist and a trained nurse. During Florida winters and Adirondack summers, Elizabeth's "Woods Symphony" was set aside for wrestlings with theories as to care and feeding. For the baby, she was a coward, afraid of germs, of boats, of perils seen and unseen. As the months slipped into years, his delicate beauty, his haloing curls, his heaven-blue eyes, seemed those of an earth-strayed angel; she agonized lest he escape her detaining arms.

The distant father knew, through the doctor's regular reports to him, only that the "good woman in the neighborhood" cared for the boy as if he had been her own. Each month came John Haviland's check for the child's board—five dollars a week, the price fixed by Mrs. Thad in the beginning. With a smile, Elizabeth always deposited it to the boy's bank account. It would hardly have paid the expressage on his highness' certified milk.

When Elizabeth came to the woods early for the boy's fourth birthday, Mrs. Thad had a letter to show her, forwarded by the doctor. It announced the return of the boy's father to New York and his intention of making an early visit to the carry: "There to thank the good Mrs. Tubbs for her care"—communications had been in Mrs. Thad's name, for convenience—"to remunerate her further, and to make arrangements for the child's future."

Elizabeth read the crisp words and caught the tip of her tongue between her teeth.

"Indeed!" she said softly, for Boy was almost asleep. "We shall *see!*" She pressed her cheek against the soft baby hair.

Mrs. Thad regarded her fondly. "If you look all melted and glowy like that for love of a baby—how will you look when you love your man?"

Elizabeth held the boy closer.

"He's all I want," she said almost fiercely. "But he's all mine!"

II.

At sunset time on the boy's birthday, in the white-birch playroom, amid white hangings, in white clothes, Elizabeth sat on a white fur rug and held in her lap the rather too white little lad, who was weary.

A white Persian kitten, whom the doctor accused Elizabeth of boiling daily, played with a white ball. Elizabeth's cloudy dark hair, close to the boy's golden curls, was the strong color note in the prevailing whiteness. Mechanical toys, which had been once set going and held no further interest, stood about the white room.

Came a knock at the veranda door. Without moving, Elizabeth called:

"Come in, Thad!"

The door opened, and on the threshold stood a man, tall and broad-shouldered, with a lean, tanned face and steady, deep-set blue eyes. So much Elizabeth noticed in the second that they looked at each other.

Behind the man, an English bulldog regarded her with the same direct look as his master. They seemed like well-bred travelers who had journeyed hard and far.

The moment's silence was broken by a cry from the boy in her lap:

"Take him 'way! He'll bite!"

"The dog—send it off, please! He is afraid."

"Go back, Bill!" said his master, with eyes still on the child. The dog obediently trotted down to the lake.

"I am the boy's father," said the man quietly.

She knew that, of course, instinctively; but she wished he had not begun so—his fatherhood gave him such an advantage. He looked so able to claim his own. Her chin touched the warm softness of the boy's hair. Taking heart from that, she said:

"You are his father, but he belongs to me."

"Tum in. Boy's father!" suggested the boy hospitably.

"Ah, yes!"

Recalled to her manners, Elizabeth rose lithely from the rug, letting the child go from her. He stood looking up at the man in grave, childish appraisal.

"I has a birfday," he said, "an' a engine, an' a wabbly bear, such many fings to play wif——" The baby voice was weary.

"I've brought you something to work with, little son."

Elizabeth winced at the possessive tone, but the two were not heeding her. The tall man took from the pocket of his blue serge coat a hammer and a handful of nails; not a new toy hammer, but one much used—a real hammer for work. The boy's face was athrill and alight.

"Boy's hammer?" he asked, incredulous. He took it with a sudden, funny air of importance. He studied it silently, feeling its weight, clutching in his other small fist as many of the nails as his fingers could hold. Then, with a radiant look at Elizabeth: "Boy is a man!" he said, and streaked from the room.

"A star exit!" laughed his father; but Elizabeth swiftly followed the boy to the door.

"Selma, are you there?" she called. "Don't let the baby hurt himself with that hammer. Wash it in bichloride before he plays with it."

The trained nursery maid flew to obey, and Elizabeth returned, a little anxious frown between her expressive eyebrows.

"Oh, I hope he won't pound his fingers! I never knew him so pleased with a gift," she admitted generously. "These others tired him."

"I loved that hammer when I was a kiddie," said the man. "What do you mean?" His tone became slightly imperative. "Why do you say he belongs to you?" He stood looking down at her with steady blue eyes that reminded her of the boy's. "Are you Mrs. Thaddeus Tubbs?"

"No, I can't claim that by many inches." Elizabeth laughed, though he was unsmiling. "But I am the woman to whom you gave him, the 'sensible, good woman in the neighborhood.' I hope I 'give satisfaction,' Mr. Haviland?" With confidence she awaited some expression of his appreciation of the boy's unexpected environment and advantages.

"So far——" he began, and paused to take a long, slow look at the luxuriously appointed room, with its charming affectation of simplicity—the white-birch-paneled walls, the antler candlesticks disguising electric lights, the plethora of toys. At last his eyes rested on Miss Ford, the expensively exquisite, as was obvious even to a man.

"So far——" he began again, and was interrupted by deafening screams, rapidly nearing. As Elizabeth rushed to the door, the small boy burst into the room, his mouth wide open, his temper outraged, his hammer waving, ready to wreak vengeance on what had dared hurt him, his tiny finger upheld for pity. Selma ran at his heels, unable to be heard. Elizabeth dropped to her knees before him.

"My baby! That dreadful hammer! I knew he was too little!"

She looked her accusations at the father, who promptly possessed himself of the implement brandished above her devoted head. Renewed screams and struggles to reach the hammer proved the hurt less than the anger at being hurt.

"Not too little!" screamed the child.

"Not unless you are a cry baby," said his father. "Let me show you." The boy, suddenly silent, watched interestedly. "You can't pound your fingers if you hold it so."

"I'm afraid——" Elizabeth began, and stopped.

The tall man crouched beside the child and drove a nail into a bit of kindling wood. Patiently he guided the childish fingers to the same sureness of aim. Elizabeth held herself still, till the last nail was driven.

"Now for bed, Boy," she decreed, and held out her hand. But his were full—one clung to the hammer, the other proudly curved about the nail-studded kindling. His manner waived the feminine mandate.

"More nails," he demanded of the tall man, who seemed suddenly the arbiter of his career.

"Nails to-morrow. Good night, son."

Again Elizabeth winced at the tone. What had he done to own the boy?

"Good night, then, Mr. Haviland. I always put him to sleep myself."

"He never goes to sleep alone?" he inferred.

"No, he would be afraid of the dark. He has never been alone in his life," she assured him complacently.

"I bet he hasn't, poor kiddie!" ejaculated John Haviland, and, taking his panama, he strode to the veranda door. On the threshold he turned, speaking quietly, positively: "So far you certainly do not give satisfaction." He bolted down the path to the lake, where his dog waited.

The next morning Mrs. Thad and all the mechanical toys were drawn up in line on the veranda "to watch Boy hammer." Boy had the masculine conviction that to watch him was sufficient diversion for any number of devoted females. Elizabeth watched from her desk in the living room. Beside her a blue-covered legal paper was ready for John Haviland's signature. It had waited his return ever since, long ago, she had decided to adopt the boy.

She hoped the hammering was not bad for his nerves. Had Selma "timed" him she wondered? Want of nails had failed to discourage him; he pounded for practice in the meantime.

Suddenly his childish shout: "Boy's father! Nails!" advised Elizabeth that the nails must be forthcoming, though her desk did not overlook the path.

"Bill has them for you, son," said John Haviland's deep voice.

"But he's scared of dogs," expostulated Mrs. Thad hurriedly.

Elizabeth, rising, saw the brindled bulldog outlined, bowlegged, against the lake, a paper bag dangling from his undershot jowl.

"Come, take the nails," invited the boy's father quietly.

Encouraged by the matter-of-course tone, coveting the nails only to be thus acquired, the child hesitatingly advanced; then put out a quick little hand and snatched the parcel from the stolid jaws.

"Now, go 'way!" he commanded valiantly, and ventured a brief pat on the dog's hard, flat head.

"Usually he'd have throwed a fit!" observed Mrs. Thad. "But the nails was worth it!"

Elizabeth, within, wanted courage to present the legal paper. Yet it might as well be signed at once. She could see that John Haviland's eyes turned often from the far blue hills to the busy child, while Mrs. Thad discoursed, extolling her two deities.

"You find him in good hands; yes, sirree!" she was saying. "He's dread-

ful sensitive, that child. Goes inter sorter transoms if he gets a speck on his white clo'es or if they take a teaspoon stid of a egg spoon to feed him his egg——"

"To feed him?" queried the father.

"Yes, he's never fed hisself. Lots o' poor children his age feed the younger babies, but he's a prince. Lucky he's had me to bring him up. I never'd had time to think of all the things that might happen. He never plays with no children fer fear o' bein' exposed——"

"Exposed?" echoed his father.

"To somethin' catchin', o' course. She's 'fraid of boats for him an' give up her music—— I say it's well she ain't married; no man'd have stood bein' set aside for a baby so. The woman in her seems all mother."

At the sudden personal tone of the conversation, Elizabeth wished she had gone out to greet Mr. Haviland before interruption became awkward.

"We don't never let him get scared or excited," boasted Mrs. Thad. "He rests an' eats an' plays by the clock. His food is sterilized an' weighed scientific, I tell *you!* Yet with it all, the little tike is kind o' delicate——"

"And no wonder!" exclaimed the new parent unexpectedly, as he rose. "May I see Miss Ford?"

Elizabeth met him as he entered the living room, the legal paper in her hand. With the delicate perfection of her features and her dress and her grace, she had the air of royalty dispensing largess as she proffered the paper.

"You are anxious to make arrangements for the boy's future," she said graciously. "I am ready, Mr. Haviland. My side of the bargain has been more than carried out, though in Mrs. Thad's name. You stipulated for a 'sensible woman who would be good to the boy'——"

"And I find you neither the one nor the other," said John Haviland in grave, even tones. She was speechless with incredulous anger. He went on: "I chose the woods' life for him that he might be sturdy and strong. I find him pampered, coddled, spoiled—and you expect me to be pleased——"

"Oh, I see!" She thought she understood. "You mean you cannot keep it up—that it unfits him for a harder life. But he need not have a harder life. That is provided for—I shall make him my heir. The lawyer prepared the papers." Again she held out the blue-covered document, which he took, without moving his eyes from her face. "You will find it ties me to full responsibility. It relieves you utterly, permanently. Will you sign now?" She tried to take it casually for granted.

"Not now," he said. Carefully he put the paper into an inside pocket.

"Ah! Then when?" She caught the tip of her tongue between her teeth and looked away, toward the window whence came the sound of intermittent hammering: "When?" she repeated in bewildered desperation.

"Perhaps never." His firm finality appalled her.

"But you have no right!" she broke in. "You happen to be his father—true. But you deserted him before he was born. I saved his life—I gave——"

"Do I not know? You have lived for him." His voice was inflexibly gentle. "Yet now you are not giving him what I demand——"

"What you demand?" she echoed bitterly.

"My son"—his tones rang possessively—"my son must not be afraid! My father was a soldier—the Havilands are unafraid. I am his father and responsible——"

"You seem suddenly aware of that—after four years!" Her eyes burned with pain as she faced him, blazing.

"When he was born—I had not been told—anything. When I knew, and—his mother was dead, I had to stay by

my post. The climate there was intolerable. My relatives offered to do everything for the boy. But I chose the hardy life for him among the hills. I often pictured him, a sturdy little urchin in blue jeans. The doctor wrote that all was well, that the good woman on the carry was fond of the boy. I see now you had censored his reports. You feared the unknown parent might trade on your love of the boy—you poor rich folk become suspicious. You thought all this"—he indicated the luxury around them—"would make up for your deception. I don't want it for him. What does it matter to a man? My son must be a man!" His tone was suddenly afire. "The average woman is unfit to bring up a boy, alone."

"But I am not the average woman," she told him hotly.

"That—forgive me—is yet to be proven." His voice was cool again.

"How?" She hardly knew her stifled one.

"I shall camp for six weeks on the carry," he said, as if planning a casual vacation. "If, at the end of that time, you have begun to make a man of him, he shall be all yours. But if you cannot conquer your nerves and fears, to make him brave and manly, then he is mine."

Her lawyers had warned her of his right to take her child, "his child," as they stupidly reiterated; yet she ventured:

"But if I refuse the terms—if I claim him now?"

"In that case, I shall take him now."

"Oh, you have no right!" she cried.

"I have no right to let you cheat the country of a man!" he said.

III.

She could not live without the boy, therefore she must prove herself as dauntless as this Spartan parent required. She set her teeth and balked at nothing, clenching her hands, but not protesting, when the boy was taught to walk, sure-footed, on rocks that slanted to deep water. He learned to climb, to bait a hook, even to use a jackknife, to be forfeited if he cut himself. He did not, however, and Elizabeth marveled.

Mrs. Thad made the boy a wee bathing suit and took naturally to the relaxed regimen. The trained Selma fluttered over the blank chart, with nothing to show the child specialist in case of illness. But the boy was well and the time of probation was almost past. Within a week he would belong irrevocably to Elizabeth, for his father was a just man and she had fulfilled the terms.

She almost counted the hours till the paper of adoption should be returned to her, signed.

Perhaps a [illegible]e of jealousy strengthened her loving, for the boy adored and absurdly imitated his father, who had, however, scrupulously refrained from demonstrations of affection or any effort to usurp her authority; in fact, all his orders were made to come through her. Hence her own lack of courage was unsuspected by the boy.

He was learning to swim. At first he had cried, afraid of the water, yet steadfastly obeying his father's coaxing summons; soon he had been gleefully shouting on his parent's dripping back, clamoring for more; and finally he had to be forcibly borne ashore, with promises of a dive to-morrow.

Moreover, as there seemed no way out of it, Elizabeth herself had taken it up, under protest. Bathing in public had never appealed to her, she had said.

"It is sticky and promiscuous at the sea; tiresome and dangerous anywhere. I suppose I am fastidious," she had admitted.

"You are positively old-maidish,"

John Haviland told her frankly. "If you hope to get rid of me, you must be able to take my place. Since you are to win out, the sooner, the quicker!" He had laughed, but she had fancied she saw a hunger in the look he gave his son. "You will take only a fifteen-minute lesson to-day," he had conceded. She had given in, perforce.

And now she had come to like it—the plunge, the stroke, the depths, once so fearful, now so friendly, seen level-wise across cool ripples that laved her cheek. She would bring in that water motion as an undertone in her "Woods Symphony"; for she had been composing again since John Haviland had induced her to improvise all one evening, and the boy, waking, had gone to sleep again, on his father's promise of more music—if he kept perfectly quiet in bed. The man had "a way with him." In seven days he would depart alone. Elizabeth steeled her heart against the thought of his loneliness; he could live without the boy and she could not.

From the thatched summerhouse near the dock, she saw his boat approaching from the carry. She knew his stroke, longer than the guides', even before she discerned the stodgy form of Bill, the bulldog, in the stern. She looked over the stretch of twinkling waters, thinking it were well to go to the house for her bathing suit, or his peremptory summons would deprive the act of her own volition.

Suddenly, along the dock flew a tiny figure, with white little arms and hurrying legs—Boy, in his bathing suit, running for the end of the dock.

"Swim to daddy!" he cried.

And as she sprang to her feet, the child jumped from the dock into deep water as fearlessly as he often had into his father's arms.

On winged feet she sped after him, her brain numb, herself forgotten. The dock seemed to reach to eternity. Then she plunged, as he rose to the surface, and seized the frightened child with one arm while her other laboriously stroked together with her feet.

She could take but a few strokes, none if the boy struggled. Desperately she smiled into the stricken baby face.

"What fun, Boy!" she gasped. "Keep swimming for daddy."

She wisely did not try to progress; only to keep their heads above water—till John Haviland should come. His frantic rowing from the instant of the boy's call must cover those cruel waters in time! Reassured by her grasp and smile, the baby—as he still was—paddled froglike; but her wet skirt was dragging her down.

She breathed deeply, quickly. Just to keep afloat—to give him—his boy! With a last anguished effort, she raised the child's arm to his father's reaching hand; then, sinking, she felt herself seized by the hair.

She came to on the dock; above her leaned John Haviland's face, white and horror-drawn. The boy, in Thad's coat, was laughing in Mrs. Thad's arms.

"Lucky you had hair enough to grab," presently said John Haviland in a queer voice. "It's not worn this year, I believe."

She let him take her hand and draw her to her feet; but, as he tried to put his coat about her wet shoulders, she broke away.

"He was nearly drowned—your doing! What a fool!" she said, and fled up the path to the chalet.

An hour later, clothed and in her right mind, she came out to the veranda. Boy was cozily lunching, the bulldog in the big chair with him, Mrs. Thad hovering over him like a plump, ministering raven.

John Haviland, from watching the boy, turned quickly to meet Elizabeth.

"I waited to give you this." He spoke in a low tone, holding out the blue-covered adoption paper. "It's signed," he said simply.

"Then I will do?" Her voice, to herself, sounded somber.

"Yes."

"But I was not brave," she owned. "I was terribly afraid."

"Oh, you may be as afraid as ever you like, if you don't let on. And you magnificently didn't!" His eyes paid tribute to her courage. "I can never forgive myself—you know that."

"You *would* treat him like a man—poor baby!"

"But you won't baby him now," he said confidently. "So we've come to the right, between us. I'm off to-morrow night. I shall sign another South American contract, to be well out of your way. Can you forgive me—for being more or less of a fool?" He offered his hand, and his eyes were inscrutable.

"Can you do without him?" she exclaimed.

"He's yours. I don't *want* him!" He wheeled and went down the steps. "Good-by, son!" he called without pausing.

"'By!" returned the boy casually. But the bulldog, scenting trouble, bounded clumsily from the chair and down the path after his master. Elizabeth's eyes strained after the disappearing boat as John Haviland rowed away.

He did not want the boy! She pondered that, dumbly, fruitlessly, till Boy's little hand slid into her own.

"Come, dear," he coaxed. "Get worms to fish with daddy."

"Fish with me, honey heart," she said, and suffered herself to be led to the worm box, walking on tiptoe at Boy's behest.

"'Cause anywhere, in pine woods," he raptly explained, "we *might* step on a fairy! Here's one *slippy* worm!" he declared, as rapturously, bending over the worm box.

John Haviland did not *want* the boy! She could not fathom that.

When she played the boy to sleep that evening, her fingers strayed into the water motion, with its ominous undertone that seemed to presage parting and sorrow, bringing her "Woods Symphony" to an end. As the final tones sobbed in dying, she crossed her arms and bent her head to them above the keys, sitting motionless a long time.

At midnight the moon, waning, hung above black velvet mountains, and the moonlight made a rippled lane to the far shore. She shivered at her window, and went in softly to the boy's room to cover him from the sudden chill breath that came from the hills.

She leaned in her nightdress over his white crib, and he moved murmurously, as her hair touched his hand, letting his fingers play dreamily with the soft cloud of it.

"Your hair comes round me like a tent," he said, cuddling it to his cheek's curve, a little Pelleas. He slept again. Elizabeth lay wide-eyed till dawn.

With the first bird twitter, she rose, and, at her bedroom desk, wrote a note to John Haviland slowly, with cold, tense fingers:

> You were right. I *am* the "average woman." The boy is yours He needs a man. You might keep Mrs. Thad till he is used to—the—change. I am going away—to Munich for my music. He is your responsibility, after all.

Inclosing the note with the blue-covered document which he had signed, she lighted a taper and sealed it meticulously with her signet. She had burned her bridges.

The brown, shedlike station in its treeless little clearing was almost deserted at seven o'clock that morning, when Thad, in his sagging buckboard, drove Miss Ford and her small trunk alongside the wooden platform. He stayed only to deposit her trunk and to shake hands, as the old guide and friend always does at the end of the

season; his eyes had a hurt, puzzled look as he drove off.

In the distance was the blue mountain beyond her lake, five miles by water, but ten by road, as they had come. At this hour, Boy would be awake, chatting to the birds; he always had it out with the birds early in the morning. The train, of course, was late.

"Only fifty minutes late, though!" the station agent said proudly as he rolled her trunk to the platform edge. "Ticket t' N' York?" he inferred, and she assented, trying to look as if it mattered.

Dully, tirelessly, she paced up and down, turning away from the far blue mountain behind the woods, only to face it again at the next turn. The road they had come invited her back again. It branched, near by, to the river landing for those who had come the short way by water.

He must want the boy—he must be made to want him! That thought obliterated all others as she walked to and fro.

A boat made the landing. The train feebly whistled, and, pulling up grade, snuffled discouraged to the platform. The agent "talked it over" with the conductor; leisurely boarded some freight; then laid hands on her trunk.

"Leave that alone, man!" The shout made him pause. "Tell him you're not going, Miss Ford!" She wheeled to face John Haviland. Hatless, in high fishing boots, he breathed hard

"The boy!" she demanded.

"Come back to him!" was the quick command.

"You go—I can't——"

"All aboard!" suggested the conductor tentatively.

She turned toward the train.

"I can't go through it all again!" she said under her breath. "Why did you come? How did you know so soon?"

"All aboard!" called the conductor firmly; even this train must leave.

John Haviland did not touch her, but his tone held her still.

"If you go, I go, too. As I am!" He glanced at his wading boots and flannel shirt. "We had better go home by boat?" he offered urbanely as the train reluctantly drew out.

"How dare you stop me?" Her voice was low lest the station agent scent a "scene," though she spoke at white heat. "You said you didn't want the boy, but you must! You're his father, as you often reminded me—now live up to it! I refuse to take charge of your child—you can't make me. Take him, then. You will make a man of him, and he—oh, he will make a god of you——"

"You have told me!" John Haviland exulted. "That's what I came for—to know why you did it. You loved him better than heaven—than life—and you gave him up for me!" She would have denied, but he rushed on: "I thought you were all his—I wouldn't say I loved you, lest you take me just to get the boy. I was tempted to hold him as a bribe—then I would not have you so. I was going away without telling you. I was afraid to stay. Most beloved, I was jealous of the boy!" His arms were fast held to his sides, for the agent was nearing. "Come, my dearest dear!" said John Haviland in the tones of his boy.

Where his boat was beached all awry, as, in his haste, he had left it, he stood below the bank and held out his arms to her above him.

"That confounded agent can't see us now." His eyes compelled her. "Jump!"

"I'm—afraid!" she said, and—jumped.

"Mrs. Thad sent your note by motor boat with this." He tossed her a folded bit of ruled paper with one penciled

line, as the narrow guide boat was slipping up the river.

Beat it to the train. mrs. Thad Tubbs.

"I saw you coming round this bend," owned Elizabeth softly.

"You saw me, then. Were you afraid?" he challenged.

The boat kept him at safe distance, taking him thus at disadvantage. She let her eyes tantalize him a moment; then:

"Afraid?" she drawled. "No-o-o—I knew you would make it!"

"Knowing me!" He gloried in her concession.

"No!" she said. "Knowing the train!"

"You—woman!" said John Haviland.



A WIND I KNEW IN ARCADY

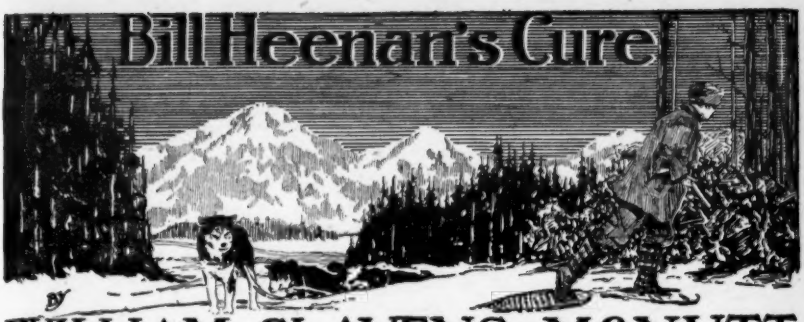
AS dusk fell down, there blew for me,
A wind I knew in Arcady,
A tricksy wind, a very gnome,
Joying to fright the fireflies home;
Or soft or shrill it sighed or sang,
Or bells of Elfland featly rang
(We called them lilies of the vale)
Or kissed the roses red and pale,
Or, hoyden-wise, raced down the lane,
Where haply loitered lovers twain,

With their new love just breaking bloom.
Ah, then? Ah, then the wind found room,
In that lone green and scented space,
To blow her hair across his face,
Or, swelling swift to wild alarms,
To send her to his sheltering arms.
A prankish air! Ah, me! Ah, me!
The wind I knew in Arcady!

And yet—and yet—I would not miss
The bitter pain, to lack the bliss;
So, ambushed in the falling dusk,
My soul fills with the rose's musk,
All ghostly faint from that dead day,
Too blest to go, too fair to stay;
And Fate, relenting, sends to me.
A wind I knew in Arcady.

MARTHA MCCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.

Bill Heenan's Cure



BY

WILLIAM SLAVENS McNUTT

BIGFOOT SCHUMAN, the owner of the Gold King Dance Hall, spied Heenan and Harris as they entered his place, and pried his way eagerly through the crowd to greet them.

"If you ain't come to see me pretty soon, I send the marshal for you," he scolded. "You been in camp more as a week already and not once yet you set foot in my place."

Heenan grinned. "You're real welcomin' to a couple o' guys with a hundred thousand apiece in their kicks, ain't yuh, Bigfoot?"

"O-o-oh, boys! I'm always glad to see my friends if they got money or ain't. You boys are always——"

Heenan chuckled derisively. "Yeh! Yuh love a man 'thout money same's a Siwash loves work. All right, Bigfoot; we'll spread a little cash around before we leave. We come down to take a look at that new girl we been hearin' such a lot of."

"Jessie Murdock? O-o-oh, that's a fine girl, I bet you! She makes it fine singing and dancing, Bill, but she got foolish notions."

"Yeh?"

"She should be a grand lady, to get ideas what she got. Mike Harper wants she should marry with him, and Mike's got it a half million dollars, sure. Would she take him? Nah! When he wants he should hold with her hands, or a kiss maybe, she won't speak with him again. Now her mamma—ah! There's a lady got sense."

"Her mother?"

"Sure! She got her mamma with her. Her mamma tells her all the time she should be nice with the boys and marry with some man like Harper, with moneys. Would you want to meet with her, Bill?"

"Not on a bet! I hear tell so much about her I just thought I'd drop down and see what she looked like."

Bigfoot chafed his fat hands greedily. "O-oh, sure! Come with me up in a box, Bill, and we get maybe a bottle wine while we watch her. Soon she is coming on now."

Envious eyes were on Heenan and Harris as they followed Bigfoot to a box near the small stage, for they had sold their claim on Murphy's Creek but the week before for one hundred thousand dollars apiece, and were in Noonak reaping their reward of idleness and excitement. It was February, much money was tied up in winter dumps, and a man with one hundred thousand in cash was a man to envy.

"See what a business she draw?" Bigfoot exclaimed ecstatically, surveying

the crowded hall from the box. "All the games running, the dance floor full, and plenty at the bar. Only when she does it dancing and singing, everybody stops to watch, Bill, and you wouldn't believe how much I lose that way. That's why she goes on only three times a night. See? They know she is soon coming now."

Men were deserting the different games by the score and pressing eagerly forward toward the stage; the bar, crowded but a minute before, was abandoned; and the dancers had stopped. The sound of clicking chips, whirring wheels, and tinkling glasses had stopped, and the murmur of the waiting crowd slackened expectantly.

The orchestra struck up a lively air, and the hall vibrated to the crowd's roar of welcome as a girl in gauzy garments, with a great wealth of shimmery, copper-colored hair piled high on her dainty head, undulated gracefully from the wings and spun about on her pink-slippered toes. She danced well, but it was the spiritual perfume of her personality that held the rough crowd entranced. She had the gift of expressing pure, girlish charm by her every movement, and this quality struck home to the crowd she played to—a crowd inured to bitter hardships at work and naked sin at play—with stunning power.

To Heenan she was the antithesis of his life. She was everything that he was not, everything that he had never known. By his life he was hardened to Nature at her stormiest, to men and women at their worst. The fresh, flowerlike quality of this girl's personality dissolved his strength, and his eyes drank her beauty with something of the awe with which one might behold a vision.

The music ceased, and the little dancer retired, bowing and smiling, while the crowd roared. The orchestra struck up the prelude to "Annie Laurie," and a brooding hush settled gently over the place as the girl reëntered.

Clear and sweet the words of the old song floated out on the smoke-laden air. From somewhere in the throng a woman's sob sounded, sharp and agonizing, and then again the silence so laden with emotion. True and pure, quivering with feeling, the sweet voice soared:

"And for bonnie Annie Laurie, I'd lay me doon and dee."

The music ceased, and for a moment there was utter silence. Then a sighing breath and the storm broke. Men, with tears streaming from eyes long dry, stood on chairs and pounded strangers on the back; gold coins, rough nuggets, small pokes that lit with a mouselike thud, were showered on the stage at the foot of the smiling girl. Responding to the applause, she sang "The Last Rose of Summer," and then "Home, Sweet Home."

When she had finished, she fumbled with her fingers in her hair for a moment, shook her head suddenly, and stood forth enveloped in a glistening, copper torrent of loosened braids that showered down about her and flowed on the stage at her feet. The crowd had come to know that this trick of letting her hair fall signalized the end of her performance, and surged back now to the games, the bar, and the dance floor.

Heenan rubbed his eyes dazedly and uttered an exclamation.

"I'm bawlin'!" he announced amazedly. "She made me bawl!" He leaned suddenly across the table and gripped Schuman by the arm. "I want to meet with her," he said savagely. "Hear? Yuh can fix it. I want to meet with her."

Bigfoot grinned greedily. "Sure! I fix that. You wait here. But don't be mad if she stands offish like, Bill. She's that way."

"Bill, don't go mixin' with a dame,"

Tin Can pleaded plaintively as Bigfoot left. "You'll only——"

"Get out!"

"Yuh ain't big enough to hold me in if they's a girl comin' in the party," Tin Can retorted, and vanished.

Heenan closed the curtains to screen the box from the floor. He was trembling, and there was a haze before his eyes. The emotion that shook him was desire, a cry of hunger from every nerve in him for this girl who embodied all that he had never been, never had, and never known.

He rose unsteadily at the sound of Bigfoot's voice just outside, and at sight of the girl in the box so near him, his tongue refused him utterance.

"This is the gentleman I told you of, Jessie," Bigfoot said. "I want you should be nice with Bill, here, now, 'cause he's a fine friend of mine, and when he takes a fancy to a dame, like he done right away to you, he don't care nothin' for a few dollars, I bet, to give her a good time. Hey, Bill?"

Heenan tried to answer, and couldn't; tried to smile, and only succeeded in making a bashful grimace. The girl stood silent, watching him wearily. An ugly gleam lit Bigfoot's eyes.

"Couldn't you say something nice, maybe? Or smile a little?" he snarled at her. "Should you think, when I bring you to have a good time with such boys as this, you must get mad from it? What the hell——"

And then Heenan moved. He caught Bigfoot's fat throat in his hands, and the man's eyes bulged from the terrible pressure of those oak-tough fingers. The girl stepped back a pace, and for a moment watched the unequal struggle without fear or surprise. Suddenly a flash of hope passed over her face, and she laid a restraining hand on Heenan's arm.

"Let him go, Mr. Heenan," she begged.

Heenan obediently relaxed his grip, and Bigfoot slumped to the floor.

"I ain't a killer," Heenan remarked regretfully. "But I sure would like to've been writ down on his tombstone as the cause of his deceasement!"

He caught Bigfoot by the slack of his collar and jerked him to his feet.

"Get out!" he ordered. "And then stay out. And if it ever comes to me that you've as much as thought a mean word about this girl here, I'll kill you! That goes!"

"O-oh, Bill, you make a mistake," Bigfoot stuttered affrightedly. "She's a fine girl, and I wouldn't never——"

"Hike!"

Alone in the curtained box with the girl, all Heenan's bashfulness, lost in anger, returned, locking his tongue and setting his body a-tremble.

"Why did you jump on him?" she asked suddenly.

Heenan flushed. "I—— Why, I don't know. 'Cause he—he was mean to yuh."

"What do you care?"

Heenan stared in surprise. "Why, I wouldn't stand for that."

"You sent him to bring me here. Why?"

"I—I like yuh."

"I wonder. I suppose when you find that I won't let you hold my hand or kiss me or get fresh with me in any way, you'll swear at me just as Schuman did."

Heenan shook his head. "I don't want to kiss yuh."

"You don't?"

Heenan took a deep breath, and sat down, facing her squarely across the table.

"You've got me up in the air," he said firmly. "I'll give it to yuh straight. I like yuh better'n anybody I ever saw in my life, an' I like yuh different from anybody I ever knowed. I couldn't like yuh any better if I'd knowed yuh for a hundred years. An'—an' I want

to kiss you so bad that I couldn't do it unless yuh wanted me to. I—I can't put it into talk."

Suddenly the girl laid her head on the table and cried. For a minute the storm of emotion swept her, shaking her small body with sobs that were born in pain, while Heenan watched in dumb amazement.

"I'm—all in," she confessed tremulously. "I can fight the rotters and keep my nerve, but the first good man I meet breaks me all up. Do you know that you're a good man?"

"Naw, I ain't," Heenan denied rather frantically. "Don't get that idea. I want to deal straight with you. I been about as bad——"

"You wouldn't kiss me unless I wanted you to. They don't make them better than that. I'm proud to have you—like me. Will you help me?"

"You bet I will!"

"Do you want to marry me?"

Heenan's face went suddenly dead white, and the girl shook her head sadly.

"Don't let me hurt you, Bill Heenan. I can't marry you now, you blessed white man, but I want to be engaged to you and I want people to know it. My mother means all right, but the only thing she can think of is my marriage to some man—any man—with a lot of money. She'll do anything to force me to that, and I—I'm getting very tired. Unless I have some sort of help, I know that one of these days I'm just going to give up and take some man of her choice that I detest. I'd make a terrible mess of life if that happened. You've got money, and if mother knows that I'm engaged to you, she'll let up for a while. Will you help me?"

Heenan nodded and gulped. The girl's face grew tender.

"And if I can, I'll make it a real engagement in the end. I'll try to want to, Bill Heenan."

Heenan cleared his throat with an effort. "Your maw's been tryin' to marry yuh off to some guy yuh don't like?" he inquired.

Jessie nodded. "Money's an obsession with her. She's never had it. Dad was poor and her father was, too. As soon as I was able to walk, she spent every cent she could get to have me trained in singing and dancing. She's always felt that through me she'd escape the bondage of poverty. I worked below for several years, but never got very far, and then mother heard tales of the money paid girls up here in the dance halls——"

"She hadn't ought to brung yuh to no such place."

"She doesn't mean wrong. How—how does it feel to be engaged?"

"All right."

"I—I suppose it would be the proper thing now for you to—to kiss me."

"You don't want me to?"

The girl's eyes filled. "No."

The muscles in Heenan's body were so taut that each and every separate thew and tendon ached from the pressure.

"I reckon I'll wait," he said quietly.

Harris sat on the edge of the bed and regarded Heenan gloomily, the while the latter shaved.

"Bill," his irritation broke into speech.

"Yeh?"

"Ever since yuh got engaged with this girl, yuh been just about as good a little pal as a deef, dumb, an' dippy kog-mollok. It's been three weeks now, an' in that time yuh ain't had a drink, ain't played a hand o' stud, an' yuh spent no more money than a sober Swede would. Why for?"

Heenan laughed happily. "I'm off all that stuff, Tin Can. I played that game hard an' long, an' now——"

Tin Can waved his arms defensively. "Don't tell me about it, 'cause I know

it all by heart. Whenever does the execution take place, Bill?"

"I dunno."

A worried look passed over Tin Can's face as he looked at his partner.

"Say, Bill, I may be a fool butt-in, but I'm goin' to talk anyhow," Tin Can broke out impetuously. "I wouldn't if yuh weren't so hard hit. Do yuh know anythin' about Burton?"

"Burton? No. Who's he?"

"Accordin' to the talk o' the whole camp, he's the guy this girl o' yours was crazy about down in Dawson. Go on. Tear my head off if yuh feel like it, Bill. But everybody in the camp's buzzin' about it except you, an' I reckon you'd best know it."

Heenan turned back to the glass. "All right," he said shortly, and Tin Can soft-footed out.

Heenan dressed, and hurried to the shack where he quartered his dogs. He got the harness on them, beat and damned them into line, and swung away toward the eastern edge of the camp, where Jessie Murdock lived with her mother in a three-room log cottage. She saw him while he was yet at some distance, and when he halted his dogs in front of the house, she was out in the snow, all dressed for the trail. Heenan noted with a stab of pain that, in spite of the prospect of the ride and the tang of the crisp air, her face was wan, and she smiled up at him with a palpable effort.

To the howl of the straining wolf dogs, they whipped out of the camp, rounded the shoulder of the first hill, and sped along the winding trail that led down the valley. On a far rise, Heenan halted the dogs and turned to the girl.

"Who's Burton?" he asked abruptly.

The girl gasped. "Why?"

"I hear talk of him. Tell me or not as yuh like. But I'd rather know."

"He's—the man I loved."

"Loved?"

"Love!"

Heenan went tense like a man meeting a physical shock. "Can yuh—ever get over it?"

"I don't know. I hope so—almost. Oh, Bill, don't let me hurt you like this! It isn't square to take advantage of you the way I'm doing, with so little of even hope to offer you in return. But I was desperate, Bill, and I——"

"I ain't kickin', am I? Where is this fellow?"

"He's not around here, Bill. Oh, it's all over between us. I didn't play square with him. He was poor, and I sacrificed him to my mother's ambition. It would be the part of a coward to call him back—or try to—now that I've found out that I can't—can't hardly live without him."

Heenan passed a fur-mittened hand across his forehead.

"Gawd! I wish I had a drink," he muttered.

"You poor man! Go back to camp right away and get it."

"Nope. I've quit."

The girl looked at him curiously. "You haven't had a drink since—since that night, have you?"

"Nope."

"Why, Bill, there's no reason——"

"I reckon there is. I'm hopin' that yuh may want to kiss me some day. If yuh ever do, I reckon I'm not goin' to muss up them lips o' yourn with hooch."

"Bill!" The girl's eyes swam with sudden tears. "I wish it was you—now. I honestly hope it will be—some day."

Heenan smiled grimly. "I'll string along with yuh on that hope. Le's move. Hi-yah! Mush on there, yuh brush-tailed malemute cache thieves! Mush!"

High in the still sky the mystic northern lights flared and died and flared again. The multicolored streamers shot up from space beyond the horizon,

wavering, changing in shape and color, licking at the chill vault of the arctic heavens like the questing tongues of blind things.

A square of yellow light bored a tunnel in the night as Doctor Martin let himself out of the Murdock cottage. He had gone but a few steps when the door opened, slammed again, and big Bill Heenan caught step with him.

"Gimme the low-down on this thing, doc," he requested gruffly.

"Brain fever."

"Any chance of her gettin' well?"

Doctor Martin kicked designs in the snow with the toe of his moccasin.

"She could if she wanted to," he burst out irritably. "The supreme hell of it is that she doesn't want to, and, not wanting to, she probably won't. If we could only make her fight, make her want to live—— Has she been badly worried about anything?"

"I reckon."

"That's the answer, then. Her mother assured me she hadn't had anything to worry her."

"You can't do nothin' for her?"

The doctor looked at him curiously. "Know what a helligowhiffus is, Bill?"

"No."

"Neither do I. So far as I know there is no such thing. But suppose there was—something strange, complicated, and inexplicable. Suppose I found one that was out of fix and brought it to you and asked you to mend it. Be stumped, wouldn't you? Well, Bill, I know just as little about a soul as you do about a helligowhiffus. I think that girl has one and that it's badly out of fix. As for my mending it, that's a tragic joke. I might better attempt to invent some way to turn the northern lights up there on and off at will. At least I know they exist, and I don't even know that much about a soul. That's the 'low-down' you asked for, Bill."

"All right. Good night."

Heenan retraced his steps and entered the cottage. Mrs. Murdock sat huddled in a chair, her hard eyes wide with fright and her shallow, selfish face ugly with the disfigurement of terror. Heenan granted her a grimace of dislike, and tiptoed softly into the sick room.

Thirstily he drank of the startling beauty of the girl's face on its billowy bed of shining glory, the alluringly shrouded outline of her lovely body beneath the crumpled coverings, the voluptuous swell of the round breast rising and falling to her quick breath. And then slowly, in unconscious contest with every inch of movement, he sank to his knees and bent above the embodiment of his greatest desire, breathing there on the bed. His circling arms hovered over the palpitant breasts that blushed through the weak shield of the white nightdress, and his starved eyes ate ravenously of the maddening beauty of the fever-flushed face and shimmering hair.

The weary lids of the girl's eyes opened. The faintest flash of recognition crossed her face. She smiled faintly, a smile of perfect trust, and closed her eyes once more with a contented sigh. One hand, which lay outside the coverlet, sought his gropingly, instinctively. The action was like a sleepy child's response to a mother's touch. The fingers pressed Heenan's lightly, and relaxed.

Heenan rose suddenly. He stepped to a stand near by, and, raising a pitcher of water to his lips, drank deeply.

"Why, yuh ornery, low-down, no-good——" he cursed himself in a matter-of-fact tone when he had done, and sat down by the bedside. Without hesitation now, tenderly, but without passion, he caressed the hot cheeks, smoothed the damp hair from the girl's forehead, and, crooning soft sounds of sympathy, stroked the lovely bare arm.

Later, when Mrs. Murdock entered

the room, she gasped to find Heenan striding the floor, bearing the delirious girl on his chest, rocking her lightly in his great arms. The mother began a protest, but Heenan silenced her with a look and she retired.

And when the girl's delirium grew worse and she babbled of the man she loved, Heenan but listened intently until the whole fabric of her tragedy, with names and places, was fairly complete in his mind.

Then he tucked her into bed, and, seating himself near, made promises to her in a low, firm tone, until, under the insistent repetition of his pledge, she grew quiet and at length dropped into a peaceful sleep. When Heenan left the room, there was the faint shadow of a happy smile on her face.

The blizzard struck Nugget City about eight o'clock in the evening; a whistling, blanketing blizzard that brought solemn reminscences to old-timers safe near a warm fire and to their lips prayers for those caught on the trail.

In the Sun Dog Dance Hall most of the crowd was massed about the roulette table, where one man was scattering his bets with a mad abandon that caused a thrill even in that land and time of high play. Old Charley Nelson was the first to notice the newcomer who stumbled into the hall, shut the door, and leaned his back against it. From head to foot he was a shapeless mass of snow and frost. The draw string of his parka head was tightened until the opening was no larger than the mouthpiece of a telephone, one dark eye on the head of the mass of white, suggesting an arctic Cyclops. Charley's quick eye noted that the man's knees were sagging, and, with an exclamation of pity, he went to him, undid the draw string of the hood, and threw it back over his head. Two brilliant blue eyes blazed out at him from between lids that were red and fearfully swollen, and Charley stepped back with an exclamation of recognition.

"Bill! Yuh froze, boy?"

Heenan gulped and shook his head. "All in. Get me—drink. Somebody—take care my dogs."

"Where yuh from, Bill?" Nelson questioned him when they were seated by the fire.

"Noonak."

"When did yuh leave?"

"Midnight last night."

"My Gawd! That's a hundred an' twenty mile."

Heenan nodded. "This blizzard near done for me. Do yuh know a man by the name o' George Burton, Charley?"

Nelson jerked his thumb toward the roulette table. "He's over there tryin' his damnedest to go broke an' not succeedin' any too well. He's got a boob's luck, an' he's been winnin' so fast for the last two or three days he has to cash in every few hours to keep the nouse in chips."

"What do yuh know about him?"

"Not a lot. Seems like a real white sport most o' the time. Blew in here las' part o' the summer without a lot o' money, worked around the cricks for a while, an' then bought No. 28 from 'English Bill' for five hundred dollars. Never nothin' found there, but he located the pay streak, an' about a week gone now he sold for a hundred thousand. He was always kind o' quiet an' moodylike, but after he got his hooks on that cash—— Wow! Zowie! He's been shootin' like a madman."

"Point him out. I want to have a powwow with him."

Seeing him for the first time, Heenan acknowledged to himself with a stab of pain that Burton was both good looking and strong. Just now his handsome face was distorted with the insanity of dissipation. He sat bent over in his chair, placing his bets with sneering

abandon, watching the spin of the wheel with cynical carelessness. Heenan sighed and tapped him on the shoulder.

"I want to talk to yuh—alone."

Burton looked up with an evil glint in his eyes.

"Who the hell are you?"

Heenan leaned near and whispered. The flush went from the boy's face, as if an invisible vampire had suddenly drained him of his blood.

"Take care o' my checks," he said huskily to a friend, and rose.

"She's dyin'," Heenan informed him simply when they were alone in a room over the hall. "For no other reason than want o' you, I reckon. If yuh hustle, yuh may get back in time to do her some good."

An ugly light of suspicion entered the boy's eyes. "How do you know she wants me back? What do you mush a hundred and twenty miles after me for?"

A little shiver went through Heenan's body, but he answered quietly enough: "I been engaged with her. When she got sick, I——"

"Oh, you have, huh?" The suspicion became a sordid certainty, and Burton went quite mad. "You heard about the luck I had and the two of you framed it to cinch the money before I could spend it! Not a chance. That girl got me once. I thought she was one of the real ones. She strung me along for a while and then threw me flat because I wasn't there with the price to pay for her. I tried to think different for a long time, but there's no other out. And now, the minute I make a stake worth listening to, she sends her——"

"Look out!" Heenan cut him off. "Don't say it! This girl's——"

"I don't want to hear anything about her. I thought she was the best in the world, but now that I know she's a——"

The crack of Heenan's fist on his mouth stopped the word. Burton crashed against the wall and slumped to the floor, a heavy-breathing, unconscious heap.

"Finish it," he mumbled sullenly when he regained his senses. "You'll be doing me a favor. I'll drink myself to death in a few weeks, anyhow."

"Behave!" Heenan admonished desperately. "I tell you——"

"You can't tell me anything," Burton declared, struggling to his feet. "If you don't want to help me out by croaking me, I'm going down and finish the game."

"He's crazy!" Heenan muttered as the boy staggered out. "Why couldn't he have stayed poor? As long's he's got any money, he'll——"

He started suddenly and swore, in admiration of the inspiration that had come to him, and then stumped wearily down the stairs.

The boy was back in his seat at the roulette table when Heenan reëntered the hall.

"Yuh made some tall talk to me upstairs," Heenan addressed him. "I want a come-back. They tell me you're huntin' for high play; I'll give it to yuh. You've got a hundred thousan' or so, and I can match that. I'll play yuh freeze-out for the roll."

"Oh, yuh will, huh? Come after my roll, and if you can't get it one way, you'll——"

"Money talks; an' mine's makin' an awful noise right now. If you're huntin' for high play, listen to it."

Burton brought his fist down on the table with a bang that made the chips rattle.

"I'm on! Yuh can't beat my luck, and I'll just clean you out, for what you think you're going to do to me."

Blond, dapper little Bob Enderby, the proprietor of the Sun Dog and one of the nerviest gamblers in the territory, stepped between them.

"Freeze-out for a hundred thousand

a corner!" he said softly. "I don't want to be a pest, but may I make that three-handed?"

"More the merrier," Burton agreed recklessly.

"This is between Burton an' me, Bob," Heenan cut in. "Personal matter. Bob, will yuh take my check——"

"I will not," Enderby interrupted quickly. "Not unless I'm permitted to make a third of this little party. Let me in on the game and I'll be delighted to accommodate you."

"All right," Heenan agreed irritably.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," Enderby crooned ecstatically, "this is destined to be some poker game!"

And some poker game it undoubtedly was. For thirty minutes the Goddess of Chance smiled with tantalizing impartiality on all three of her wooers. Then the action the crowd awaited so breathlessly began.

Heenan dealt. When he had done, he placed the deck carefully in front of him, picked up his cards, and peeked into a straight flush in diamonds with the jack on the top end.

Enderby, seated on Heenan's left, scanned his cards and anted.

"Let's get a little life into this," Burton suggested, after an inspection of his hand, and boosted it five thousand.

"Not enough," Heenan declared, and calmly added twenty-five thousand to the raise.

"Never again may I truthfully say I am sorry I was born," Enderby crowed. "I'll just add twenty thousand, making it fifty thousand in all before the draw."

Both Burton and Heenan saw Enderby's raise, and Bill took up the deck to deal.

"Couldn't use another one," Enderby protested politely.

"I'm good," Burton said shortly.

Heenan laid down the deck. "I'll play these I first got."

"My! My!" Enderby mocked. "I seem to have a trifle more chips than either of you. I just tap you both."

"I call," Burton managed after an effort, and shoved in his stack.

With a movement of his arm, Heenan added his own chips to the flood in the center of the table.

"What yuh got?"

"A perfectly good straight flush in the excellent suit of clubs," Enderby said triumphantly.

"How high?" Heenan demanded sharply.

Enderby shot him a quick glance and smiled with keen pleasure. "Same thing? Some game! Top card's a queen, Bill. The lovely ladies always——"

"Jack here," Heenan said abruptly, and laid down his hand. "I was right under yuh."

Trembling in spite of his effort for control, Burton laid four aces and a trey face up on the table.

"They d-don't look as fierce as they did when I got 'em," he admitted, with an attempt at levity.

Then the tension broke with a shout, and the babble of the crowd flooded the place.

Heenan was dazed by the sudden turn. He had meant to break Burton, and then, if he was able to bring the boy to his senses, restore the money to him. But now——

Burton had risen, and was halfway to the door before Heenan noticed that he was leaving. He called to him, but the boy paid no attention, so he rose and hurried after him. He stepped from the door just in time to grab Burton's wrist, and the bullet the maddened boy intended for his own brain spanged into the night. Heenan wrested the gun from him and led him upstairs into the room whither they had gone on Heenan's arrival.

"Are yuh ready to start now?" he

asked scornfully. "Or do yuh still think that I'm tryin' to frame yuh?"

Burton beat at his forehead with his clenched fist. "I can't go now!" he moaned. "I'm broke. I——"

"She thinks you're broke while she's dyin' for want of yuh."

"What a rotter I've been! What——"

"Forget that 'been' stuff," Heenan said, suddenly kind. "Boy, love don't hit everybody in the eye. Lots o' men has wives, but they ain't all of 'em got love. You've got it, an' it's up to you to forget whatever you've been or done an' give that girl somewhere near a fifty-fifty cut for lovin' yuh like she does. Mebbe yuh don't amount to a lot, but that don't stop her from thinkin' yuh do. 'Cause she does, you're bonded for all you're worth, an' yuh got to produce. How soon'll yuh be ready to start?"

"We—we can't go in this storm."

"I come in it. How soon?"

Burton shuddered, and suddenly stood straight. He seemed with the movement to shake off the blur of suffering and drink that had clouded him, and stood forth a man, strong, sane, and purposeful.

"Now!" he said firmly. "I'll hike over to the shack and dress for the trail. But—— Why, man, you just got in! You haven't had sleep, nor——"

"I'll have lots o' time to sleep some day," Heenan said wearily. "I'll wait for yuh downstairs."

Doctor Martin left the Murdock cottage and walked thoughtfully across the snow toward camp. Near the gulch where the Kindalar Trail branched off to the north, he saw the outlines of two dog teams and two muffled men, dim in the arctic night. As he came near, Heenan hailed him:

"How is she, doc?"

"She'll get well," Doctor Martin assured him emphatically. "This fellow Burton you brought her seems to be splendid medicine. You haven't been to see her since you got back, have you, Bill?"

"Nope."

"She's asking for you."

"So?" Heenan handed the doctor a black satchel that hung heavy in his hand. "Give that to Burton, will yuh? I feel as though I kind o' made this match that's comin' off, an' so I want to see 'em get away to a good runnin' start. They's ten thousan' in there that I borrowed from Tin Can, so don't leave it layin' around loose."

"But why don't you——"

"I'm off. Tin Can an' me's hittin' the trail to-night for the Kindalar country up north, prospectin'. They say it's a good land."

"But—aren't you going to see——"

"I reckon not. Good-by, doc."

The doctor was a man of sense. He realized that this was a situation where so much could be said that it was better to say nothing. Heenan and Tin Can called to their teams, and the two sleds creaked and whined ahead.

Within a few yards Heenan stopped and called back: "Hey, doc!"

"Yes?"

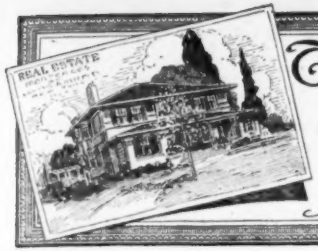
"Haven't found a helligowhiffus, have yuh?"

"No."

"If yuh ever do, and it's broke, bring it to me. I reckon I'd find a way to fix it."

The doctor stood on the dark trail, watching the shadowy outlines of the two dog teams straining away to the north, bound for the mystery of a new country. As he looked, the northern lights suddenly rose in the heavens, issuing from the borders of the pole in the direction in which the two sleds whined.

"I believe he would!" the doctor muttered almost awedly. "By George! I believe he would!"



The Advertising Agent

By Katharine Baker

"YES, the third-story fronts have gone. They're leaving the city," explained the landlady.

Her tone was the courteous one befitting a response to any remark from the second-story front, but her glance was free, and expressed displeasure as it alighted on the third-story hall bedroom.

The landlady hoped she sympathized properly with misfortune, but she had no time for stinginess, and a Latin teacher in the "high" could well afford a decent lodging. Why should such a person not occupy at least a third-story front, thus helping a landlady's struggle to meet her rent? Besides, the landlady had been married, and felt all the natural contempt of her state for old maids, although the defunct Mr. Mickle had left her nothing but a half-grown son.

Georgie, the son, rather liked the teacher, who was gradually worrying a little Latin into his head at school, a thing no one else had ever been able to do. Of course, she was old-maidish looking, even slightly withered, and she had about as much style as a last year's celluloid collar. Still Georgie liked her pretty well—in her place. She had thrown a glimmer of light on the subjunctive mood, and had cleared away much of the mystery that enshrouds the agreement of adjectives.

Just now the Latin teacher looked somewhat wistful. She longed to become an airy third-story front, instead of a stuffy hall bedroom. But she had ever before her, as Mrs. Mickle had not, the needs of a widowed sister "married South," whose jewels, like Cornelia's, consisted entirely of babies. One could not enjoy a bed bought with hungry children's meals.

"Don't you fret. The rooms will rent. If somebody doesn't blow in soon, I'll fix you up a little ad that'll do the work, all right." Thus the second-story front comforted Mrs. Mickle. "Meanwhile, we're quite cozy. A regular family party," he hazarded, with a glance at the school-teacher.

She was small, faded, quiet, dressed in black, a shadow of a woman; he, large, red-faced, opulent, the beaming sun itself. A brown, basket-weave waistcoat mercifully clouded the effulgence of his pink shirt. A handsome, scarlet-barred handkerchief glowed from his breast pocket. His whole costume competed successfully for attention with the sparkling diamond upon his stout, red hand. You realized at once that success was a familiar friend of Mr. Butler's.

The doorbell rang. The maid brought in a parcel.

Mr. Butler reddened still further when he recognized it. He cut the strings carefully, and placed the package before the teacher.

"A little thing I saw downtown," he announced bashfully. "It looked so much like you, I thought you ought to have it."

"If you will allow me to pay for it

——" remarked the schoolmistress primly, removing the covers.

No man had ever offered her a gift before. She wasn't quite sure how to behave. Certainly one oughtn't to accept presents of value, but perhaps——

"It's nothing at all," he hastened to assure her. "Only a pretty little picture."

The teacher held it up. It was a hand-colored print of the Sistine Madonna, and if she had known its price, she would undoubtedly have fainted dead away.

"I don't see any resemblance," said the acid landlady. "It's more Mr. Butler's own complexion, decidedly. He has such a good skin. You're more pale and sallow altogether."

Mr. Butler turned an anxious eye on the teacher.

"You do look a little off color, miss," he ventured. "You ought to take a tonic. Try 'Health Bloom.' I've advertised it very extensively. It's a great seller."

The Latin teacher laughed. She had a soft little chuckling laugh, seldom heard.

"You're a very good advertisement for it, if you've used it," she said.

This sally visibly charmed the gentleman; but Georgie, wearied by so much conversation, rose and went off upstairs, singing, *"Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres"* to the tune of "Tres Moutarde," with a complete disregard of quantities that made the teacher shudder. *"Longissime absunt,"* his voice died away in the upper regions.

"I have such a time with Georgie these spring days! He's downright cantankerous. Nags me to let him go fishing, or picnicking—anything to get out of school," complained Mrs. Mickle, in an injured tone. Why could not schoolmistresses make learning more alluring to the young? That was their business.

Her lament gave Mr. Butler a happy opening.

Five minutes later, when the Latin teacher retreated to her room, an unheard-of thing had been planned. She, the erudite, the unsocial, had agreed to go on an excursion in search of health, with an advertising agent. Georgie was to go along for propriety. Propriety indeed! Georgie couldn't make it proper to accept gifts and invitations from an unsubdued barbarian.

She wondered to herself if the second-story front wasn't absolutely vulgar.

Still, it was a nice sort of picture. She tried it on her wall in various places with pale enthusiasm before she could bring herself to correcting exercises, and hung it at last opposite the foot of the bed. When I say that the package had contained a picture hook and wire, you will perceive that Mr. Butler was indeed a man to tie to.

At last she sat down to examine those sentences in which Julius Cæsar was freshly slaughtered each day. Appeasing the perturbed spirit of the wounded commentator was not a congenial task to-night, but she was never used to doing as she liked.

When she had folded the last paper, and made a little note, "Remember to point out the shocking misuse of *suus* and *eius* interchangeably," she leaned back with a sigh, and, after a moment of absorbed consideration, began to speak. The genius of the Latin language paused respectfully on his way out, to listen.

"I wonder," she murmured thoughtfully, "if I should look too ridiculous in a Gaby Deslys hat."

When the famous Sunday of the excursion dawned, the hat had led to further extravagance. Sixth Avenue had furnished a gray suit, and pumps.

The teacher was breathless with a fearful joy in her own nefarious acts.

Mr. Butler was undisguisedly ravished by the transformation.

Mrs. Mickle provided a luncheon, which she compelled Georgie to carry, that it might not mar the splendor of the boarders.

Their coming to Woodland Height was all an accident. They started to go to Sudderly, because Mr. Butler had lately heard a friend descant on Sudderly's charms, but the trolley passed through Woodland Height on the way there. They looked about them; they looked at each other; together they exclaimed: "Oh, let's stop here!" And, laughing with satisfaction at this clear proof of affinity, Mr. Butler helped her down.

They roamed about Woodland Height for a while, inspecting bewitching houses "To Rent" by the delightful method of peeping through the windows.

Presently Mr. Butler asked to be excused, and mysteriously disappeared.

He returned in half an hour, triumphantly mopping a radiant forehead.

"Nailed a contract in that time," he announced. "I've got the advertising for this place. They may go into it on a big scale, too. What they want is publicity. It's the garden spot of the earth."

The teacher had faintly resented his disappearance, but her pique vanished. Who could withstand this energetic creature, overflowing with vitality and good humor? The easy business victory seemed to justify her yielding to his friendly advances.

They sat on the porch of their favorite house to eat luncheon. They gathered flowers in the wood. Georgie was civilly unobtrusive. An outing with a schoolmistress had too much of the *memento mori* about it to suit him.

It was a very successful day, and even Mrs. Mickle admitted at night that its benefits were evident in the teacher's shining face.

The next fortnight was full of agreeable moments. The schoolmistress had never really lived before. Mr. Butler's attentions wrapped her about like a luxurious garment. His kindly look enveloped her like the warmth of the sun. She hardly noticed the advent of a transient from Cecil's Landing, recommended by Sister Julia, and dressed like a country bride. But the transient noticed her, noticed Mr. Butler also, and wrote Sister Julia one of those pleasant, neighborly letters that help to brighten all our lives.

Sister Julia's answer was put into the schoolmistress' hand just as she was leaving the house with Mr. Butler, on their way to the Bronx Park, and she thrust it into her pocket without much interest. You could always predict the contents of poor Sister Julia's letters. She never wrote unless she needed something. Even so, she wrote quite often.

When they got into the subway train, Mr. Butler maneuvered carefully for position. He did not talk much, but allowed her attention to wander.

Presently, above the head of her vis-à-vis, the name of Woodland Height caught her eye, and the picture of a Flagg young man earnestly entreating a girl who had more than a fleeting likeness to the Sistine Madonna.

Interested, she read the printed lines. They ran:

> Of course you knew I love you true.
> I've found the very house for you.
> Come live with me, we'll happy be,
> At Woodland Height beside the sea.

She turned away, and met the conscious eyes of Mr. Butler fixed upon her.

"That's the way I feel, all right," he stated. "How about it, miss?"

She could not answer. There didn't seem to be anything to say. She appeared to herself utterly futile and ridiculous.

He watched her in suspense, but, see-

ing her confusion, generously relieved it.

"You'll think about it, anyway, won't you?" he asked, and she nodded.

Then he began talking easily of peaceful, common subjects, and said no more of love.

In the park he made her sit down on a shady bench, and reminded her of her letter. He engaged in conversation with a park guard concerning the habits of flamingos—for he was a person of insatiate curiosity—and did not see her changing expressions as she read.

It must be nice, Sister Julia thought, to have plenty of money, and no cares. One could then enjoy every luxury, if one had a heart that could forget those less well off.

Sister Julia herself—being endowed, thank God, with an unselfish spirit—could freely rejoice that others had magnificent suits and expensive hats and shoes, though her own children went practically barefoot, and were the laughingstock of their acquaintance in matters of dress.

At least, however, they had always held up their heads with the best families. They were well connected.

But what was this painful rumor that their aunt was about to disgrace her refined ancestry, to marry a loud, coarse, boorish person, said to be a drummer or something equally vulgar?

This was too much. They asked nothing for themselves. If it was not a pleasure to provide for these dear children, they desired no favors. They could starve, or go in rags, but as for discreditable alliances, those they deplored.

Sister Julia's letter was one long wail.

The schoolmistress folded the letter and put it away, with a flaming face. She looked down at her pretty suit with piteous misgiving. Was she, then, so vilely selfish? She glanced across the road at the portly figure of Mr. Butler, surveyed him from his shining, patent-leather shoes and brilliant blue socks to his rakish derby hat. Was she blinded by folly? Was he really a vulgar sport, and not merely a kind creature with an amiable weakness for bright colors?

She thought of the advertisement, and it revolted her a little. Who that had not a drummer's soul would post up his love messages for the whole world to read—would use them as a means of income?

"Poets all do," she defended him to herself, but she had no genuine respect for poets.

She got up uncertainly, and went toward him. He turned to meet her with a smile that changed to concern at her words.

"I—I really must go home," she said.

That was a puzzling and a dismal home-going for him. She sat with tight-clasped hands, with frowning eyes fixed on the corrugated floor of the car. When he spoke, she answered so distantly that he soon refrained. Bad news, or a bad headache, he surmised, and was solicitous with small attentions.

That night, if any one had occupied the second-story hall room—but since the passing of the transient it was empty—the unfortunate person could have slept very little. Until a late hour the schoolmistress packed feverishly.

When she came down to breakfast, her trunk stood locked in the middle of her room. Upon it were several parcels, addressed to Sister Julia at Cecil's Landing, and containing the unlucky hat, the gray suit, the pumps, all the discord-breeding finery of the schoolmistress' brief courtship. On the bureau lay the Madonna, wrapped in paper, and marked with Mr. Butler's name. The teacher had left no trace behind her, except a damp place on the pillow.

She came intentionally late to breakfast. Mr. Butler had departed.

She paid her bill, left instructions for the expressman, and was gone before

the confounded Mrs. Mickle could investigate the reason for such conduct.

In the long spring weeks that followed, the Latin teacher learned that being noble is the most disheartening occupation on earth. Work is not a burden, though some pretend to find it so; earning money is a pleasure; giving to others is delightful. But renouncing, doing without things you want, merely because it is said you oughtn't to have them—that takes all the spice out of life very quickly.

From her new boarding house she had to ride to school, and she became exceedingly friendly with the Flagg young man and the Sistine girl, regretting in anticipation the day on which they should make room for some other advertisement, and the last reminder of her unpopular love affair should vanish.

At last arrived the occasion when, with a slight sinking of the heart, she looked in vain. Then, in a moment, she saw—and her fastidious soul was half offended at the sight—a new and more inviting substitute, a well-remembered landscape, labeled:

Right down this hard macadam road
You'll find a green lawn, smoothly mowed.
That house of artificial stone,
Wired for lights and telephone,
Just craves a mistress of its own,
At breezy Woodland Height.

"Why, he keeps on precisely as if I hadn't done anything!" she reflected, with surprise.

But, of course, since he had had the idea, probably he hadn't wanted to waste it.

The new boarding house was not very clean or attractive. Georgie, when he came to school, wore an injured air, and hardly spoke, a proof of his mother's displeasure at her flight. No message from Mr. Butler.

Evidently she need not have been in such a hurry, she told herself. He wasn't at all persistent. A word from her would have sufficed, and she need not now be sleeping between sheets that wouldn't reach and finding dust on the window sill.

She thought remorsefully of Mrs. Mickle, and tried to plan a conciliatory advance. To be sure, she could never go back, but they might be friends again, for all that.

One day a robust boy was absent from school. Next day they all contributed money to buy flowers for his funeral. It was malignant scarlet fever, and the doctors said there was far too much of it in the city. Some even hinted at closing the schools.

About that time came a letter from Sister Julia, with perfunctory thanks for the clothes and a suggestion that the eldest girl was sixteen, old enough to study music in New York, if it could be provided for.

To which the patient schoolmistress replied that spring was not the season to begin, especially when scarlet fever was rife. But she would think about it, and if her salary was raised, as she hoped it would be, something might be done in the autumn.

That would mean sharing the hall bedroom, and the inadequate sheets, she thought wearily, as she sent the letter.

Sister Julia, in an unparalleled burst of sisterly affection, responded with some of her delicious strawberry preserves, express C. O. D.

On the day on which she wrote to postpone the visitation, the Latin teacher unexpectedly encountered Mr. Butler. She entered a train crowded with men and resignedly sought the support of a strap, when he, who, among his other peculiarities, had the habit of giving up his seat to women, suddenly rose beside her. He gave the place silently, as to a stranger, but something in her tired face made him bend over her after a moment.

"Of course I could have got your address easy enough, but I don't want to pester you. These advertisements"—

he waved his hand toward a fresh placard above them—"you needn't look at them if you don't want to. But I keep right on hoping you will."

He smiled at her encouragingly, lifted his hat, and was gone. For the rest of the journey she read and reread the placard.

The air is fresh, the sky is blue,
There's nothing finer than the view.
Housekeeping there is a delight,
Where every house is water-tight,
And all the plumbing work is right.
Do please come live at Woodland Height.

Horace and Vergil might have derided the versification, but the Latin teacher was so absorbed that she was carried past her station before she noticed anything.

The jam arrived one morning as she was leaving for school. That day, looking at Georgie's saturnine countenance, she determined to make an expiatory offering to Mrs. Mickle. Two jars of the jam might please her. It was sure to be nice. The teacher planned the gift happily.

At night, as she reëntered her room, a slender little figure rose to meet her —the ghost of herself, clad in the gray suit, the pumps, the feathery hat.

"I've had scarlet fever, and mamma and I thought I ought to begin at once," said a sweet Southern voice. "So I've come to stay with you, auntie."

The schoolmistress gasped and surrendered.

Next morning she left the little niece to see the town with a fat, bargain-hunting boarder, and set out for school, carrying her two jars of jam.

Late in the day, after Georgie's Latin class was over, she called him up and timidly made her propitiation.

"I can't take it to ma," said Georgie, with unwilling honesty, for he loved strawberry jam. "I'm not staying home now. They're quarantined. Mr. Butler came in sick yesterday, and the doctor says it's scarlet fever."

The desk rose and heaved to and fro for a moment before the teacher's eyes. Then it settled back into place.

"In that case, keep the jam yourself, Georgie," she said quietly.

She heard her last class, set her desk in order, and rode back to her boarding house, all in a strange, steady calm.

There was a new placard in the car, a lyric burst. She gazed at it with impersonal curiosity.

"The last one. It certainly is the last, this time," she said to herself, as she read the conclusion of his absurd love-making:

We have arbutus in the spring;
You ought to hear our catbirds sing;
And yet we are so near to town
Our dearest friends can all run down.
I'd like it best of anything,
With you at Woodland Height.

Presently the words grew indistinct behind a mist of tears.

The little niece was in a tremor of delight when her aunt returned. The shops were full of heavenly things; the bargain hunter had kindly lent her money, and she had bought one of the sweetest blouses, some silk stockings, a fan—just what she liked, in fact.

The tremor of delight perhaps was not unmixed with doubt as to her aunt's pleasure in this outlay, but the schoolmistress did not complain. She asked what sum was wanted, and supplied it without comment. She went out and talked briefly to the landlady, then returned, and with the same placid manner fired a bomb at the unfortunate niece.

"I am going away this evening, and not returning," she said. "So, of course, you must go home. The landlady will look after you to-night, and will put you on your train to-morrow. Take the new things with you."

She laid down money for the journey, and, unmoved by tears, appeals, or taunts, set about packing her hand bag. In a preoccupied way she kissed the

weeping niece good-by and went without a backward look.

As she began to climb the well-known steps, a policeman, chatting with a housemaid by the area rail next door, called a warning:

"Quarantine, ma'am. See the sign? Don't go in there."

"I'm the new nurse," answered the school-teacher placidly, and went on.

Straight up to the second-story front she mounted, carrying her bag. She knocked. Mrs. Mickle opened the door.

"Good land! Don't come in here unless you've had the measles!" she cried.

The school-teacher leaned, bewildered, against the door jamb.

"Measles?" she repeated faintly. "Not scarlet fever?"

"My, no! The doctor just suspicioned that at first. It's measles, sure."

The teacher straightened herself and laughed her little, chuckling laugh, then walked boldly into the darkened room. Mrs. Mickle gracefully stepped outside. The newcomer stooped and slipped her hand into Mr. Butler's.

"Would you really like it so very much better with me at Woodland Height?" she inquired.

THE VERNAL ECSTASY

I HEARD a robin flute to-day,
And other vernal omens say,
A reed pipe set unto her mouth,
From out the sun glades of the South
Spring comes her olden, golden way.

The willows flush with orange fire;
A flame of crimson tips the brier;
A beam of beryl runs across
The snow-free edges of the moss;
The balsam bough is like a lyre;

A tender and elusive light
Hangs mistily about the height;
From out the rillet's swelling throat
There rings a lyric rapture note;
And there are whispers in the night.

Then, O my heart, arouse and sing
The anthem of awakening!
Aye, join in the ecstatic strain,
For it shall soon be ours to drain
The brimming chalice of the spring!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



The Rebellion of Maurice Maeterlinck Hyatt

By Frank Mac Donald

ELAINE HYATT was of the Arthurian dispensation, and, though named for the lily maid of Astolat, immediately showed her spirit of revolt and disregard of the conventions by becoming a cheerful brunette with occasional severe spells of temperament. She endured all disappointments and lacerations of soul in the cheerful knowledge that she was misunderstood.

If her son Mauri had been born a little later, he would have been named either Leonid Andriev or August Strindberg Hyatt, for at that time Elaine was asserting the leadership of Andriev and Strindberg in a persistent, declarative voice. Earlier, she might have named him for a magazine-coverly hero. When Mauri was born, but not named, she considered calling him Jack London Hyatt. A fervent admirer of smashing virility encouraged her, in a burst of worshipful enthusiasm.

"Do you know," she cried, "he always writes in his undershirt?"

Daring as this might be, Elaine felt that it was going too far.

"Besides," she said plaintively, "art in underwear has become so horribly commercialized through the advertisements. They leave nothing, actually nothing, to the imagination."

"Yes, dear, but must not one face the realities of life?"

"Well," answered Elaine firmly, "underwear is one of the realities that can be safely covered."

So she went to the other extreme and named her son for a mystic.

Mauri was not in the least symbolic. He was as much boy as could be crowded into a chunky frame, as material as bread and butter, and as commonplace and welcome as pay day.

"Oh, dear," said his mother in growing distress, "I'm afraid the boy takes after me physically. Isn't that a horrible expression for inherited tendencies? But he is—he is plump. Why, he's actually stout! And I know I'm getting fat."

There was a ring of doom and black despair in the word.

"There, there, 'Laine," said Len Hyatt soothingly. "No such thing. Fat? Pooh! Perhaps—er—well, perhaps a little overaccentuation of the curves. But fat? Never!"

He had been reading an ordinary school history to Mauri, who had reached the ripe age of nine without being sent to school. He settled back in the big, comfortable leather chair, the boy perched on the arm of it, and stretched luxuriously toward the grate. The library was the only room in which he had manifested any authority. There was not a sign of a mood or a tendency in it. The other rooms all showed a

"striving and groping after realization," as Elaine confidently phrased it each time she discarded an older outfit and bought a new.

"Elaine," said Len, sitting up and stroking the boy's hair, "I've decided to send Mauri to school when the term opens."

Elaine looked at him in surprise.

"Was it not agreed that Maurice should have a strictly modernistic education? I wish him to go to a radical school if we can find a suitable one."

"Well, I wish him to learn something. I've brought him along as best I can, using these textbooks you declare are of the cave-man period. But I shall probably be forced to travel a great deal this fall and winter. He must start September 1st."

It was not often that Len Hyatt acted the cliff dweller, the primordial brute, as he did in this case. He knew perfectly well that Elaine was reading up on education. She had progressed beyond several of the older advanced ideas in teaching and had read only a dozen volumes on the Montessori method, so she had not yet made up her mind what system to pursue with Mauri.

Mauri rolled off the arm of his father's chair with a yell of glee.

"And I'll bet," he said, "I can lick any fellow in the class."

His father reproved him for the outbreak, but was secretly glad, as he believed it indicated that the boy could take care of himself.

His mother gave way to the antiquated habit of crying. She had hoped so much of Mauri—and now he was to be merely one of the seven hundred and sixty thousand children of which the papers spoke.

Her last desperate stand against the sacrifice did no good. Len had to go to St. Louis, and after the tenderest of farewells said:

"Remember, Mauri is to be enrolled Monday."

It was the hardest blow of her life, and it came just when she was centering her thoughts on the scientific art of dressing. Perhaps it was the bitterness of defeat that now plunged her absorbedly into the subject of emancipation through dress. However it may have been, black disaster faced Mauri, for he found that he was to go to school in a disenthralled garment.

It was a creation by Wollonski, a cross between a peasant's smock, a butcher's apron, a chiton, and an old-fashioned nightgown. Mrs. Hueater, an art critic on the *City Record*, in ecstacy said it was conventional fashion's deathblow. "It is an era!" she cried.

His mother thrilled with delight. It was the first time she had been able to express herself in clothes, and she was utterly fearless in deciding that Mauri should wear the thing. She had nothing but contempt for what might be said to him.

Mauri looked at the advanced garment in disgust.

"Gee, ma," he said ruefully, "it's worse than the toga that gink made out of the velvet drapery."

His mother grew stern, for she saw the reactionary in him.

"Maurice," she pleaded, "don't be a Philistine!"

"I will so," he answered stubbornly. "And when I'm bigger, I'll punch that old Wollonski."

On the momentous morning, he bravely choked down sobs until his throat ached and his eyes were heavy. He had yielded not as the weak, but as the strong who defer. Now he threw back his head, strode sturdily schoolward with one of the maids, and consoled himself with the great hope of childhood:

"Wait till my father gets home!"

He did not look right or left. He refused to take the hand of the maid,

who, her heart filled with pity, walked silently beside him.

He knew that children were following him, making fun of his banded chiton and bare legs. Their merriment was speedily turned from amusement to scandalized resentment that any one should dare wear such clothing to Public School X. There was nothing like it in the show windows of Hegelfus & Puckelberger's department stores, and no pictures of it in the Sunday papers. While Mauri felt in his heart a tremendous resentment at his mother's daring and unconventionality, he faced the ridicule, and with tousled, tow-thatched, capless head high, entered the school.

"May the Lord preserve us!" thought Miss Lehey, the assistant principal, in consternation when she saw him.

Her first impulse was to send him home. She remembered vividly the riot created by the boy who came to school in November clothed in white linen. She refrained, however, though she resolved to see Mauri's mother about it.

Her examination of Mauri caused her greater perplexity. He startled her with what he did know and scandalized her with what he did not. Nothing of the contents of that baleful book, "Facts Every Child Should Know," had reached him. But his attainments in other ways were excellent.

Finally his alertness, frankness, and confident smile won. Miss Lehey did an unusual and rash thing. She used her intelligence and judgment, and instead of sending him to the lowest class to "make up" on the things in which he was behind, she put him in Four A.

The brightness and beauty of the morning had been lost on Mauri. The mere human kindness the assistant principal showed was not. As one of her assistants was piloting him to his classroom, he made Miss Lehey sit up by waving his hand to her and saying nonchalantly:

"So long. I'll run in when I get a chance."

Miss Tillhauser, adept in the psychology of teaching, had the honor of getting him. He shook hands in friendly fashion, though it is not obligatory in the curriculum, and then took a seat as directed. The teacher had distributed the new readers to keep the class still while the necessary clerical work was done, and Mauri likewise received one. He glanced at it and tossed it aside.

"Maurice," said the surprised teacher, "why did you do that?"

"It didn't appeal to me," he said calmly.

This was his mother's one unanswerable comment on objections, questions, and pleas, and it so astonished Miss Tillhauser that her glasses hopped off, and, when she found them, she could do nothing except resume work.

In his perfectly unfettered and wholly emancipated garment of moss-green cloth, Mauri looked around. Every one's eyes were on him, including those of the teacher.

The weird, soulful, revolutionary garment was the cause. It was new, it was outrageous, and it was so absurdly simple and comfortable that it could not be otherwise than an assault on accepted institutions. Little girls tittered and preened, and smoothed in satisfaction their own perfectly proper frocks. Little boys scowled and clenched their fists. The little boys were determined to defend the sanctity of knickers and their fixedness in the eternal scheme of things.

Freddy Burns, in the next seat, whose eyes were habitually open in astonishment at the way of the world, was quivering with indignation.

"When I getcher," he whispered hoarsely and with a savage glint in his round, blue eyes, "I'll lick the pants offen yer. I'm goin'er lay for yer——"

He spoke metaphorically and idomati-

cally, of course, when he referred to "pants." Mauri did not know that.

"I don't wear pants," he said aloud.

Miss Tillhauser dropped her pen and ruler, and rapped for order.

"No whispering!" she commanded.

"Oh, I wasn't whispering," said Mauri placidly. "I was just talking."

"No talking," insisted Miss Tillhauser sharply.

"Did you whisper?" asked Mauri of Freddy.

Freddy trembled violently, but managed to answer: "Yes, I did."

"Well, then, what's the use of arguing?" asked Mauri.

That was his father's sole refuge and defense when the vanguard of the future pressed him hard.

"Maurice," said the teacher severely, "you must not talk. If you do it again, I shall recommend that you be placed in One A, so as to learn the rudiments of discipline."

"He said," explained Mauri contritely, "that he'd lick the pants off me. I told him I don't wear pants. If you want to see——"

As he rose in dignified state and started to hitch up his chiton, there was a spontaneous cry of outraged public opinion. Miss Tillhauser rushed up the aisle, and was in time to force him back into his seat. Exasperated, she warned him against further misconduct.

"I wear breeks," Maurice managed to gasp, "real Scots breeks. They're the Hootmonloch plaid."

Brute force had prevented him from giving an ocular demonstration of the truth of what he said. Now he was prevented from making further remarks. Miss Tillhauser had had to do with gunmen in the making, with backward children, and with stupid ones. This was the first time she had struggled with a child who had had the advantage of a strictly modern, free, untrammeled, and libertarian youth. It was a tough knot, but she was skilled and determined, and speedily saw that all that was necessary was directly to tell him to shut up. The summary quenching surprised and hurt him. There were a number of things he wished to talk about and explain. He looked at her, crestfallen, and then gave her a considerate and forgiving smile. From that moment she was so much his friend that, as in the case of Miss Lehey, she determined to have a talk with his mother.

Miss Tillhauser's chief fear was that Mauri's unconventionality in clothes and speech might break the order of the school. The class was a part time one, and it was with relief that she saw the children depart at noon.

Mauri had pounced on Freddy, and with his hand on his shoulder was striding along with him. Freddy was fascinated, abashed, and scandalized. All the destructive criticism he had intended to launch against Mauri's dress was for the time being kept down. He had helplessly permitted Mauri to steer him through the side gate, though the maid was waiting for Mauri at the front one, and he accompanied Mauri along the street as the latter eloquently unfolded some great plan.

He might have known what was to come. He might have known a fellow who did not wear pants was not to be trusted. He might have known——

Violently Mauri seized him around the waist and half forced, half carried him down the area stairs of the new Marbaline Apartments. Like a tiger Mauri hurled him to the concrete.

"Don't you dare make a noise!" he said threateningly, as he straddled the prostrate form of the duped friend.

Quickly he dragged Freddy's coat off and threw it aside.

The purpose of the assault flashed through the little victim's mind, and he let out a great wail.

"If you make a noise," panted Mauri,

his eyes flashing, "I'll—I'll—come around—to-morrow—at eight o'clock—and kill you!"

The appaling precision of time contained in this bloodthirsty threat left Freddy dumb. Brutally and with fiendish exultation, Mauri dragged Freddy's olive-colored corduroy breeches from him, and then, with a simple, delsartian gesture, discarded his Wollonski. While he was slipping into Freddy's clothing, he kept staring at him, and Freddy was momentarily cowed.

But when Mauri started up the stairs, the spell was broken, and Freddy let out a loud and doleful howl. Mauri had really intended to take the shoes and stockings likewise. But he felt that in the circumstances he had enough.

Regardless of the fact that he was in his medium-weight union suit, Freddy started in pursuit.

"He's crooked me pants!" he yelled. "He's a thief!"

Ordinarily he would have been no match for the despoiler. Now the burning sense of the injustice done spurred him on, and he was soon on Mauri's heels. Women shoppers looked and wondered. Men gazed and laughed. Finally it occurred to Policeman Finneran that something might be wrong. So, with a scooplike hand, he netted the flying Mauri.

The physical presence of a representative of the law did not awe or deter Freddy. His wrongs were too gigantic for that. He got a hair hold and pulled. Mauri desired above all else not to have his neutrality violated, but he had to resist. So he pushed his hand under Freddy's nose and lifted.

Officer Finneran pulled them apart, and, holding them at arm's length, demanded:

"What's it all about? Here, you, it's too early for Halloween ragamuffins."

"He crooked me pants! He's a robbery!" wailed Freddy.

Mauri had not expected this turn. He never lied, and he had not considered this stealing. He was, therefore, mightily offended when Freddy accused him of being a thief. Mr. Kasekopf, one of the nonpublishing poets who visited the Hyatt house, had often said that the true insurgent's motto should be:

"Take, and ye shall have."

Mauri remembered it. But now it did seem to be quite the best defense. So he quoted his mother:

"My clothes did not express me," he said feebly.

"Did you take by force this other boy's pants?" asked Officer Finneran sternly, though he had hard work to keep from laughing.

"I didn't use force," said Mauri candidly. "I just threw him down and took them away from him."

"Highway robbery, all right," said the officer, shaking his head.

A little girl came along, dragging Mauri's discarded garment.

"Ooo, mister," she said, "I seen him stole it and t'row dis one away!"

Finneran took it and looked it over.

"Were you wearing this?" he demanded of Mauri.

Mauri nodded, and hung his head.

"For the love of mud!" said Finneran under his breath. "I don't blame the boy for becoming a strong-arm guy!"

Neither boy, in the excitement, could remember where he lived. Each was too wrapped up in the intensity of the moment, in the great crisis that had come into his life, as Mr. Kasekopf would have expressed it. They were therefore marched, at the head of a growing procession, to the station house. There Mauri told his name, and his home was soon located in the telephone directory. His father had unexpectedly returned from the St. Louis trip, and

when he found out what had happened, he rushed around to the station.

"What have you been up to?" he demanded, when he saw Mauri.

The child pointed dismally at the inspired garment that had been the cause of all the trouble.

"It's got individuality," he said dismally and on the verge of tears. Then his voice broke. "But I won't wear it again! I won't! I won't! Not even for mummy! Daddy, daddy, can't I have clothes like the other boys? I won't be a pioneer of reform any more."

"You won't, indeed, son," said the father grimly.

It took a few minutes to transfer the clothing back to Freddy, and Mauri slipped on for the last time the garment of sartorial revolt.

"I'll buy you some mere pants," said the father.

Freddy looked down at himself, and was content.

"Say," he said graciously, "when you got clothes, you can join the team."

"All right," answered Mauri gladly. "I'll be the captain."

The boys were speedily seated in an automobile. First Freddy was restored to the arms of his distracted mother, and long explanations and apologies were made. Then the machine started again.

"And daddy," said Mauri, clinging closer, "I can have stockings, can't I? And real shoes instead of sandals?"

"You sure may," said the father.

It was an ordinary, but happy, boy that returned home.

His mother had been crying, but when she learned that everything was all right, she assumed an attitude of patient resignation.

"Elaine," said her husband gently, "you must let the boy express himself in his own terms. They are ordinary ones, it is true, but they are his."

"I am utterly misunderstood," she said.

"It's lucky all of us are," he said, putting his arm around her. "That is how we manage to get by"

She was far from mollified.

"Conform to stupid precedent if you will——" she began.

"What's the use of arguing?" asked Mauri.

His father squelched him, and his mother, looking down at the eager, happy face, could not help smiling.

With a jump he was in her arms.

"School's all right, mummy," he said eagerly, "but you've got to wear clothes that express it."



Find the Woman. You will find her in almost every generation, in almost every country, in almost every big city—the super-woman. She is not the typical adventuress; she is not a genius. The reason for her strange power is occult. When philosophers have thought they had segregated the cause—the formula—what you will—in one particular super-woman or group of super-women, straightway some new member of the clan has arisen who wields equal power with her notable sisters, but who possesses none of the traits that made them irresistible. And the seekers of formulas are again at sea. What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poictiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. The nameless charm is found almost as often in the masculine, "advanced" woman as in the delicate, ultrafeminine damsel. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

LADY HAMILTON

Patron Saint of Dime-Novel Heroines

SHE was the mother of Gertrude the Governess, the granddam of Bertha the Beautiful Sewing-machine Girl, the earliest ancestorette of Ione, the Pride of the Mill; she was the impossibility that made possible the brain daughters of Laura Jean. She was the patron saint of all the dime-novel heroines; she was the model, consciously or otherwise—probably otherwise—of all their authors. Because, at a period when such things were undreamed of, even in fiction, she rose from nursemaid to title.

Even in the books and plays of that age, the born serving wench did not marry the heir. In the highest literary flights, Bridget's crowning reward was to wed Luke, the gamekeeper, and become landlady of the Bibulous Goat or The Doodlethorpe Arms. Goldsmith was eyed askance even for making the heroine of "She Stoops to Conquer" pose momentarily as a lady's maid.

Having thus tried to show how impossible was the happening, let me work up by degrees to the happening itself.

She was a Lancashire lass, Emma Lyon by name. In mature years she dropped the "Lyon" and called herself "Emma Harte." No one knows why. Lyon was not her name; neither was Harte for that matter. In fact, she had no name; her careless parents having failed to supply her with the legal right to one.

Her father was a rural farm hand.

He died while Emma was a baby. Her mother, an inn servant, moved later to Hawarden; and there a Mrs. Thomas hired Emma as nursemaid. This was in 1777. Emma was thirteen. She had already learned to read—a rare accomplishment in those days for the nameless brat of an inn drudge. And, as nursemaid, she greedily picked up stray morsels of her little charges' education, as well as the manners and language of her employers. She learned as quickly as a Chinaman.

There is a hiatus in the records after Emma had served a year or so in the Thomas family. One biographer bridges the gap with a line of asterisks; asterisks, in biographies as well as in sex-problem fiction, may indicate either a lapse of time or a lapse of morals.

Emma reappeared from the asterisk cloud in London, where she was nursemaid in the house of a Doctor Budd, one of the physicians at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Doctor Budd's housemaid at that time, by the way, later became a Drury Lane star, under the name of "Mrs. Powell." And in that bright afterday she and the even more apotheosized Emma renewed their below-stairs friendship.

For some reason Emma left Doctor Budd's service rather suddenly and found a job as helper in the shop of a St. James' Market mercer. She was sixteen, and she was gloriously beautiful. Her figure was superb. Already she had a subtle charm of her own which drew to her feet crowds of footmen, shopboys, apprentices, and such small deer. There is no record that they one and all were sent away disconsolate.

During her brief career as helper to the St. James' Market mercer, Emma chanced to attract the notice of a woman of quality who one day entered the shop. And forthwith she was hired as lady's maid. The girl had picked up a smattering of education. She had scraped from her pink tongue the rough Lancashire bur-r-r. She had learned to speak correctly, to ape the behavior of the solid folk whose servant she had been. Now, from her new employer, she was to learn at firsthand how people in the world of fashion comported themselves. And, chameleonlike, she took on the color of her gay surroundings.

Soon she could lisp such choice and fashionable expletives as "Scrape me raw!" and "Oh, lay me bleeding!" and could talk and walk and posture as did her mistress. Trashy novels by the dozen fell into her hands from her mistress' table. Emma devoured them gluttonously and absorbed their precepts as the human system absorbs alcohol fumes.

Please don't for one moment get the idea that there was anything profitable to a young girl in the novels of the latter eighteenth century. Perhaps you have in mind such dreary sterling works as "Pamela," "Clarissa Harlowe," "Sir Charles Grandison," and others that were crammed into your miserably protesting brain in the literature courses. Those were the rare—the *very* rare—exceptions to a large and lurid list, which included such choice classics as "Moll Flanders," "Roxana"—both of them by the same Defoe, who wrote "Robinson Crusoe," and whose other novels would send a present-day publisher to State's prison—"Peregrine Pickle," "Fanny Hill," "The Delicate Distress," "Roderick Random," and the rest of a rank-flavored multitude.

Emma reveled in the joys of the local "circulating library," too; one of those places that loaned books of a sort to cause even the kindly Sheridan to thunder his famous dictum:

"A circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge. It blossoms through the year. And, depend on't, they who are so fond

of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last."

Much reading filled Emma with wonderful new ideas of life. Incidentally, it made her neglect her work, and she was discharged. Her next step was to become barmaid in a tavern. While she was there, a young admirer of hers was seized by the navy press gang. Emma went to the captain of the ship to beg for her swain's release. The captain was John Willett Payne, afterward a rear admiral. Payne granted the lovely girl's plea. He not only gave her what she asked, but his own admiration as well. Her story as a heart winner had begun.

In fiction the gallant captain would soon have tired of his lowly sweetheart and cast her aside. But Emma was not a lowly sweetheart. She was a super-woman. She showed how much stranger than fiction truth may be by deserting Payne for a richer man. First, however, she had wheedled the captain into hiring tutors and music masters for her, and she profited vastly by their teachings.

Her new flame was a sporting baronet, Sir Harry Featherstonhaugh, of Up Park, Sussex. Sir Harry was an all-round athlete and a reckless horseman. He taught Emma to ride—"a beggar on horseback?"—and she became the most daring equestrienne of the century. He taught her to spend money, too. And so splendidly did she learn her lesson that inside of a year Sir Harry was bankrupt.

Perhaps *all* rats do not leave a sinking ship; but, for very good reasons, one never hears anything further of the rats that don't. The rat that wishes to continue his career wastes no time in joining the exodus. And Emma Lyon did not disdain to take example from the humble rodent. There seemed no good reason for remaining longer at the side of the bankrupt baronet, to add to his cares and expenses. So, with womanly consideration, she left him.

She was alone in the world once more, without a shilling or a friend; equipped with education, accomplishments, wondrous beauty, and charm, but with no immediate market for those commodities. It was the black hour that, for some occult reason, seems to come at least once into the life of every adventuress.

And, in this time of need, she fell in with a beauty-culture quack, Graham by name.

Graham had devised a rejuvenation medicine—from Doctor Faustus down, the world has feverishly, piteously, seized on every nostrum advertised as a means of exchanging age for youth—and he vowed that it would make its users not only young again, but maddeningly beautiful. As an example of "after using," Graham exhibited Emma Lyon, who, he said, had once been old and ugly, and who, by a course of his elixir, had become youthful and glorious. He called his medicine "Megalanthropogenesis." Women who heard his lecture took one look at Emma and then bought out Graham's ready supply of the stuff. The charlatan was an artist in gaining his effects, as witness a report of the exhibition in which Emma posed:

> He had contrived a "Bed of Apollo," or "Celestial Bed," on which, in a delicately colored light, this exquisitely beautiful woman, nearly naked, was gradually unveiled, to soft, soft music, as Hygeia, goddess of health.

Presumably no effort was made by any eighteenth-century Comstock to suppress this show, and all London flocked and thronged and jostled to behold it. Apart from the normal crowd of idlers, came painters and sculptors to gaze in delight on the perfect face and form revealed through the shimmer of rose-colored light.

And foremost of these artists was a

freakish genius toward whom was slowly creeping the insanity that a few years later was to claim him, and whose stealthy approach he was even then watching with horror. He was George Romney, who, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, divided the homage of England's art world. Romney had come to stare at Emma. He remained to worship. He engaged her as his model, and, soon or late, painted no less than thirty-nine pictures of her.

"I call her 'The Divine Lady,'" he once wrote. "For I think she is superior to all womankind."

The black hour was past. Emma Lyon's fortune and fame were secure. Thanks to Romney, she was the best-advertised beauty on earth. Conquests came thick and fast, not treading on one another's heels, but racing abreast.

Soon, out of the ruck and forging far ahead, appeared Charles Francis Greville, wit, art connoisseur, and nephew and heir of the famed antiquary diplomat, Sir William Hamilton. Greville cut out all rivals, Romney among the rest, and won Emma for his own.

Theirs was an odd love affair. For here, too, Emma gave full rein to her craving for education. And she showed for the first time just why she was so eager to be highly educated. It was not for mere learning's sake, but to enhance the charm that gave her a hold over men. She cared nothing for any but the showy accomplishments. She already had a fair groundwork in English and ordinary school studies. She made Greville get her the best teachers in singing, in dancing, in acting. Perhaps she looked forward to a stage triumph, but more likely to outshining the colorless bread-and-butter women of her day.

Never did pupil better repay the pains of her teachers. Her voice presently rivaled that of many a prima donna. Her dancing was a delight. It was she who conceived the celebrated "shawl dance" that was the rage throughout Europe for years thereafter, and that still is used, in a very slightly modified form, by première danseuses. But acting was Emma's forte. Says a contemporary writer:

> With a common piece of stuff she could so arrange and clothe herself as to offer the most appropriate representations of a Jewess, a Roman matron, a Helen, Penelope, or Aspasia. No character seemed foreign to her, and the grace she was in the habit of displaying under such representations excited the admiration of all who were fortunate enough to be present on such occasions. Siddons could not surpass the grandeur of her style or O'Neil be more melting in the utterance of deep pathos.

In this heyday of her prosperity, Emma hunted up her aged and disreputable mother, bestowed on her the name "Mrs. Cadogan," and settled a rich pension on her. At about the same time, too, Emma bade a cheery farewell to the serviceable name of Lyon and took to calling herself Emma Harte.

Then Greville went broke.

In his new-found poverty, he hit on a plan of life foreign to all his old ideas.

He decided to ask his rich old uncle, Sir William Hamilton, to pay his debts and settle a little annuity on him. With this sum as a means of livelihood, he intended to marry Emma, and, with her and their three children, settle down in some cheap suburb.

How this appealed to Emma history forgets to say. Judging by both past and future, it is not unjust to suppose that she may have been making ready once more to emulate the ship-deserting rat. But this time she did not need to. The ship was about to desert her —for a consideration.

Greville, full of his new hopes, went to Sir William Hamilton and laid the plan before him. His nephew's derelic-

tions from the straight and narrow path had long distressed the virtuous old diplomat. And in Greville's financial troubles Sir William thought he saw a fine chance to break off his nephew's discreditable affair with Emma.

He offered to set Greville on his feet again if that luckless youth would drop Emma's acquaintance. The enamored Greville refused. Sir William insisted, raising his offer of financial aid, and pointing out, with tearful eloquence, the family disgrace that a marriage to a woman of Emma's dissolute character must cause. It was all quite like a scene from a modern problem play. But Fate, her tongue in her cheek, was preparing to put a twist on the end of the scene worthy of the most cynical French vaudeville writer.

Greville resented his uncle's rash judgment of his adored Emma, and begged him to come and see her for himself, hoping that Emma's wonder charm might soften the old man's virtue-incrusted heart. Reluctantly, Sir William consented to one brief interview with the wicked siren.

At sight of Emma, Sir William's heart melted to mushiness. He fell crazily in love with the woman he had come to dispossess. There was another long and stormy scene between uncle and nephew; after which Greville, for an enormous lump sum, transferred to Sir William Hamilton all right and title and good will to the adorable Emma Harte. And Sir William and Emma departed thence, arm in arm, leaving Greville a sadder but a richer man. What became of the three children I don't know. By the way, Emma had taught them to call her "aunt," not "mother."

Will you let me quote a deadly dry line or two from an encyclopedia, to prove to you how important a personage Sir William was, and how true is the axiom about "no fool like an old fool"?

Hamilton, Sir William, British diplomatist and antiquary (1730-1803), student of art, philosophy, and literature. From 1764 to 1800 English ambassador to the Court of Naples. Trustee of British Museum, Fellow of the Royal Society, vice president of the Society of Antiquaries, distinguished member of the Dilettante Club, author of several books. Sir Joshua Reynolds, his intimate friend, painted his portrait, which hangs in the National Gallery.

Sir William, who was home on leave of absence when he met Emma, took her back with him to Italy. But before they sailed she had prevailed on him to marry her.

It was easy. He was old.

The marriage was kept secret until, in 1791, she led her husband back to England on another leave of absence and up to the altar of St. George's Church, where, on September 6th of that year, they were married all over again; this time with every atom of publicity Emma could compass. She was then twenty-seven; her husband was sixty-one.

In state they returned to the court of Naples—the most corrupt, licentious, false, utterly abominable court in all Europe. If you will glance at the annals of the courts of that period you will find this statement is as sweeping as it is true. On her earlier visit, as the supposed brevet bride of the ambassador, Emma had been warmly received by Marie Caroline, Queen of Naples and sister to Marie Antoinette of France. Emma and Marie Caroline were kindred spirits—which is perhaps the unkindest thing I could say about either of them—and they quickly formed a lasting friendship for each other.

Emma was glad to get back to Naples. Apart from her marriage, her visit to England had not been a success. A certain element in London society, attracted by her beauty, her voice, and her talent as an actress, had taken her up. But Queen Charlotte had refused

her a presentation at the British court, and the more reputable element of the nobility had followed royal example and given her a wide berth. English society under George III. was severely respectable—at least in the matter of externals; a quality it was soon to mislay, under George IV. Hence Emma's joy at returning to a court where respectability was a term to be found only in the dictionary.

The King of Naples was a fool. His wife was the little kingdom's ruler. Emma, Lady Hamilton, became her chief adviser. Writes one historian:

> It is not too much to say of these two women that for years they wielded the destinies of Naples, and seriously affected the character of the wars that ended with the peace of Europe in 1815, when both were dead. . . . Both were endowed with powers of mind far above the average of their sex; both exhibited energy and understanding that inspired them to bold and decisive, if not always laudable, deeds; both were as remarkable for their personal beauty as for their self-reliance, their knowledge of men, and their determination to make the most of their information. To say that Marie Caroline loved Lady Hamilton is to misstate a fact; there was no love in the royal composition; but her ungovernable and undying hatred of the French inclined her, no doubt, in the first instance toward the wife of the English ambassador, and the subsequent devotion of the favorite secured an attachment that is confessed and reiterated through whole pages of a vehement and overstrained correspondence.

Naples, just then, was between two fires. There was fear of a French invasion—which arrived on schedule time—and there was also danger that England would ruin Neapolitan commerce. Emma's white hands were at once plunged, wrist-deep, into the political dough; and a sorry mess she proceeded to make of it. For example, the King of Spain wrote a confidential letter to his brother, the King of Naples, accusing the English government of all sorts of public and private crimes and telling of Spain's secret alliance with France. The king showed it to his wife, who in turn showed it to Lady Hamilton. Emma stole and secretly sent the letter to the British cabinet. The result was a bloody war between England and Spain.

About two years after Emma's marriage an English warship, the *Agamemnon*, touched at Naples, and her captain called to pay his respects to the British ambassador and to deliver a letter from the admiral of the Mediterranean fleet. After a few minutes' talk with the captain, Sir William insisted that the latter should meet Lady Hamilton.

He bustled into the drawing-room to prepare Emma for the visitor's arrival, saying excitedly to her:

"I am bringing you a little man who cannot boast of being very handsome, but who, I pronounce, will one day astonish the world. I know it from the very words of conversation I have had with him."

On the heels of Sir William's announcement, the "little man" came into the room. At first glance, he scarcely seemed to justify Hamilton's enthusiasm. He was clad in a full-laced uniform. His lank, unpowdered hair was tied in a stiff Hessian queue of extraordinary length. Old-fashioned, flaring waistcoat flaps added to the general oddity of his figure.

Sir William introduced him as "Captain Horatio Nelson."

Lady Hamilton lavished on the queer guest no especial cordiality. It is not known that she gave him a second thought. Nelson, little more impressed by the super-woman, wrote to his wife in England an account of the call, saying of Lady Hamilton—whose story, of course, he and everybody knew:

"She is a young woman of amiable manners, who does honor to the station to which she has been raised."

Yet Nelson had unwittingly met the woman who was to tarnish the pure

glory of his fame; and Emma had met the man but for whom she would to-day be forgotten. So little does Fate forecast her dramas that, at the first meeting, neither of the two immortal lovers seems to have felt any attraction for the other.

Not for five busy years did Nelson and Emma Hamilton see each other again.

Then Nelson came back to Naples, this time in triumph—a world-renowned hero, the champion of the seas, Britain's idol. He had become an admiral, a peer of England, a scourge of his country's foes. Back to Naples he came. Part of him; not all—for victorious warfare had set cruel marks on him. He had left his right eye at Calvi in 1794, and his right arm at Teneriffe in 1797. He was more odd looking than ever, but he was an acclaimed hero. And Naples in general and Emma Hamilton in particular welcomed him with rapture.

He was in search of the French fleet, and he wanted the King of Naples to let him reprovision his ships in the Neapolitan harbor. Now, France and Naples just then happened to be at peace. And, by their treaty, no more than two English warships at a time could enter any Neapolitan or Sicilian port. The king's council declared the treaty must stand. Lady Hamilton decided otherwise.

She used all her power with the queen to have the treaty set aside. As a result Marie Caroline issued an order directing "all governors of the two Sicilies to water, victual, and aid" Nelson's fleet. This order made it possible for Nelson to go forth reprovisioned—and to crush the French in the Battle of the Nile.

In the first rumor of this battle that reached Naples, Nelson was reported killed. Soon afterward he appeared, alive and well, in the harbor. Here is a letter he wrote to his wife, telling how Lady Hamilton received him on his return. Nelson, by the way, had been married for nearly twelve years. He and his wife were devoted to each other. Judging from this letter, he was lamentably ignorant of women or was incredibly sure of Lady Nelson's love and trust. Or else his courage was greater than that of mortal husband. He wrote:

> Sir William and Lady Hamilton came out to sea to meet me. They, my most respectable friends, had nearly been laid up and seriously ill, first from anxiety and then from joy. It was imprudently told Lady Hamilton, in a moment, that I was alive; and the effect was like a shot. She fell, apparently dead, and is not yet perfectly recovered from severe bruises. Alongside came my honored friends. The scene in the boat was terribly affecting. Up flew her ladyship, and, exclaiming: "Oh, God, is it possible?" she fell into my arm, more dead than alive. Tears, however, soon set matters to rights; when alongside came the king. . . . I hope, some day, to have the pleasure of introducing you to Lady Hamilton. She is one of the very best women in the world; she is an honor to her sex. Her kindness, with Sir William's, to me, is more than I can express. I am in their house, and I may now tell you, it required all the kindness of my friends to set me up. Lady Hamilton intends writing to you. May God Almighty bless you, and give us in due time a happy meeting!

France sought revenge for the help given to Nelson's fleet, and declared war on Naples. The Neapolitans, in fury at being dragged into such a needless conflict, rose against their dear king and adored queen—especially against their adored queen—and threatened to kill them. By Lady Hamilton's aid the royal family reached Nelson's flagship and took refuge there from the mob. Sir William and Lady Hamilton went along. The populace looted the British embassy and stole everything of value Sir William owned—about one hundred and ninety-five thousand dollars' worth of property in all. Thus, Hamilton was the third man who had lost a fortune through Emma.

Meanwhile, Nelson had sailed to Palermo, taking the fugitives along. There he made his home with the Hamiltons. And scandal awoke, even in that easy-going crowd. Nor did the scandal die down to any appreciable extent on the birth of Lady Hamilton's daughter, Horatia, a year or so later.

Sir William's conduct in the matter is still a puzzle. He felt, or professed to feel, that there was no occasion for jealousy. And so for a long time the trio shared the same house.

One of the courtiers who had fled with the king and queen to Palermo was Prince Caraccioli, Nelson's close friend and Lady Hamilton's bitter enemy. Caraccioli asked leave to go back to Naples to look after his endangered property. As soon as he reached the city, he threw in his lot with the rebels and was made admiral of their navy.

Presently, by the aid of England's fleet, the royal family returned. The rebellion was put down, and the king and queen were once more seated firmly on their thrones. The rebel leaders were seized and brought to trial. Nelson is said to have promised immunity to Caraccioli if he would surrender. Relying on his friend's pledge, Caraccioli surrendered. At Emma's request Nelson had the overtrustful man hanged from the yardarm of his own flagship.

This is the darkest smear on Nelson's character, a smear that even his most blatant admirers have never been able to wipe away. It is not in keeping with anything else in his life. But by this time he belonged to Lady Hamilton body and soul.

She, by the way, had managed to acquire from her friend, the Queen of Naples, a nice tendency toward bloodthirstiness; as witness the following sweet anecdote by Pryne Lockhart Gordon, who tells of dining with the Hamiltons at Palermo, in company with a Turkish officer:

> In the course of conversation, the officer boasted that with the sword he wore he had put to death a number of French prisoners. "Look," he said, "there is their blood remaining on it." When the speech was translated to her, Lady Hamilton's eyes beamed with delight. "Oh, let me see the sword that did the glorious deed!" she exclaimed. Taking the sword in her hands, which were covered with jewels, she looked at it, then kissed the incrusted blood on the blade, and passed it on to Nelson. Only one who was a witness to the spectacle can imagine how disgusting it was.

Enshrined once more at Naples, hailed as savior of the realm, acclaimed for her share in the Nile victory, the confidante of royalty—it would be pleasant to say good-by here to Emma Lyon, ex-nursemaid, ex-barmaid, ex-lady's maid, nameless offspring of a Lancashire inn slavey. It was the climax of a wonderful life. But there was anticlimax aplenty to follow.

Nelson went home to England to receive the plaudits of his fellow countrymen and to settle accounts with his wife. Home, too, came the Hamiltons, Sir William having been recalled.

Lady Nelson was not at the dock to meet her hero husband. Bad news traveled fast, even before we boosted it along by wire and then by wireless. Lady Nelson had heard. And Lady Nelson was waiting at home. Thither, blithely enough, fared the man in whose praise a million Englishmen were cheering themselves hoarse—and in whose silver-buckled shoes perhaps no married Englishman would just then have cared or dared to stand. But Nelson was a hero. He went home.

I once had a collie puppy that had never chanced to be at close quarters with a cat. I was privileged to see him when he made his first gleefully fearless attack upon one, ignorant of the potential anguish tucked away behind a feline's velvety paws. Somehow—with no disrespect to a great man—I always think of that poor, about-to-be-disillusioned puppy when I try to

visualize the picture of Nelson's homecoming.

Just what happened no one knows. But whatever it was, it did not teach Nelson the wisdom of husbandly reticence. For, a few weeks later, he remarked at breakfast:

"I have just received another letter from dear Lady Hamilton."

"I am sick of hearing of 'dear' Lady Hamilton!" flared the long-suffering wife. "You can choose between us. You must give up her or me."

"Take care, Fanny!" warned Nelson. "I love you dearly. But I cannot forget all I owe to dear Lady Hamilton."

"This is the end, then," announced Lady Nelson, and she left the house.

Only once again did she and her husband meet.

Nelson cast off all pretense at concealment after his wife left him. His affair with Lady Hamilton became public property. Their daughter, Horatia, was openly acclaimed by him as his heiress. The English were in a quandary. They loved Nelson; they hated the woman who had dragged his name into the filth. They could not snub her without making him unhappy; they could not honor him without causing her to shine by reflected glory. It was unpleasant all around.

In 1805 the deadlock was broken. Nelson was sent again to fight the French. He told Lady Hamilton and many others that this campaign was to end in his death. He ordered his coffin made ready for him. Then he sailed against the French fleet, met it off Cape Trafalgar, and annihilated it. In the thick of the fight a musket ball gave him his death wound. He was carried below, and there, the battle raging around him, he laboriously wrote a codicil to his will, entreating his king and country to repay his services by settling a pension on Lady Hamilton. Then to his next in command he panted:

"I am going fast. Come nearer. Pray let my dear Lady Hamilton have my hair and all other things belonging to me. Take care of my dear Lady Hamilton—*poor* Lady Hamilton! Thank God I have done my duty!"

And so he died, this knightly little demigod—true lover, false husband—who had befouled his snowy escutcheon for a worthless woman.

Now comes the inevitable anticlimax. All England turned with loathing from Lady Hamilton. Her husband was dead. Lovers stood aloof. Folk who had received her for Nelson's sake barred their doors against her. She had followed the popular custom of living in luxury on nothing a year. Now her creditors swarmed upon her.

Her house was sold for debt. Next she lived in Bond Street lodgings, growing poorer day by day until she was condemned to the debtors' prison. A kind-hearted—or hopeful—alderman bought her out of jail. A former coachman of hers, whose wages were still unpaid, threatened her with new arrest for debt. She fled to Calais.

There she lived in an attic, saved from absolute starvation by a fellow Englishwoman, a Mrs. Hunter. Her youth and charm had fled. The power that had lured Nelson and Greville and Hamilton to ruin was gone.

In 1815 she died. She was buried in a pine box, with an old black silk petticoat for a pall. No clergyman could be found to take charge of her funeral. So the burial service was read by a fellow debt exile—a half-pay Irish army captain.

One wonders—perhaps morbidly—if Nelson's possible punishment in another world might not have been the knowledge of what befell his "dear" Lady Hamilton in her latter days.

The May number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's Superwomen series: "Semiramis: the Original Wonder Woman."



The Personal Touch

By Bonnie R. Ginger

IT was morning of visitors' day in Ward Four.

Already there were signs of liveliness, for the patients always put on airs of wellness for that occasion. Thirteen tray breakfasts were under way, and the floor washer was under foot, and there was conversation; for thirteen women are not silent together.

Keel came first, fixing her long cuffs and whistling in her whole-hearted, slap-dash way. Then came Jaffey, day nurse in charge of Ward Four.

Of nights Jaffey was occasionally a misanthrope, and asked what was life, save the loss of complexion, and heel callouses, and aka-da-bak. But of mornings she was always an optimist, not only on general principles, but on the particular principle of her vocation. Once Keel had said: "Why *is* there so much suffering?" And Jaffey had replied: "Well, it must have been the only way God could let some of us be nurses."

Some of the patients almost thought it worth while being ill just to be nursed by Jaffey. Her entry alone was a tonic—one little chorus girl used to say, when Jaffey came in in the morning: "There! I feel like I'd had a grapefruit!" Jaffey was that bracing.

She was not pretty, though her hair was rather more than pretty. She wasn't even graceful; she walked duck-waddly, with her elbows out, a habit acquired by much carrying about of sterilized objects that must not touch other objects where germs lay in wait. Her smile was quite extraordinary. It began sardonically, and if you were only working on her sympathies, it ended that way; but otherwise it broadened out gradually, like a meadow at a turn of the road, and in order to concentrate on it, she always screwed her eyes quite shut. Once an interne had kissed her when she did that—and he was not to blame, either.

Down the ward she came with the manner of a young general, and in one glance noted each cot and its occupant, and then went to the desk between a double volley of adoring glances. But at the desk her expression changed suddenly and thunderously.

"What's Pauline doing?" she demanded.

Pauline was a blond, bovine girl who had the cot next the desk. Just now she was out of the cot and getting weakly but stolidly into some clumsy clothes.

"She's leaving," said Keel. "Doctor Jacques wants the cot."

"He wanted it yesterday, and I told him the ward was full."

"But he came after you left, and they gave it to him. Pauline's really able to go." Keel's tone was conciliatory.

Jaffey stood quite still, flushing, a thermometer in her hand. Ethan Jacques was a house doctor. He was quite young, but somehow he had the habit of always having his way about the hospital, and all the nurses catered to him—all save Jaffey. She never catered to him; she withstood him—forever was she withstanding him; and the part that amazed the other nurses was that he seemed to like her for it—perhaps because he always won.

She said nothing more. Presently the first interne arrived, whistling rag. The internes were, as all internes, heartless, in the manner of things eager and immature. It was their custom to scoot through the wards singsonging: "Hello! How *are* you? Well, well!" *"Hel-lo!* How-are-*you*? Fine, hey? *Bully!"* "Hey, there! Cheer up! The worst is yet to come!" and the like. The patients had grown used to it, and some liked it.

Keel hoisted the roguish Widow McManus in the newly made bed and left her to the braiding of two six-inch pigtails while she approached Jaffey.

"Aw, see here, Jaff! Jacques is all right. Besides, he's nicer to you than to the rest of us, anyhow."

"Keel," said Jaffey, "you're new here, and there are things you don't understand. Look here!" And she drew from the desk a little brown-paper monograph entitled "Woman and Biology: A Discussion of Destinies. By Ethan Jacques, M. D., Staff of the —— Hospital."

"Don't read the title. Look inside!" commanded Jaffey firmly.

Keel turned the few pages curiously. Not knowing your stand on the woman question, I am loath to quote this monograph. Understand, he did not take a nasty tone; he was polite—yes, even regretful. But in that thin pamphlet Ethan Jacques, M. D., settled for good and all the vexed problem of woman's place in the scheme of things. You perceive he had a bold mind.

It was *not* that he wished for woman the fireside-cradle destiny; he took pains to state his perfect sympathy with her higher aspirations. But truth is truth, and better to face it; even woman must admit that. If man merely had ordered the scheme, she would be justified in her rebellion. But the decree was not man's; it was *nature's* And one may not defy nature. Thereupon, he presented a little résumé of nature—still in the sympathetic manner; indeed, that made it so hard to bear. One can fly up at a merely crabbed crank, but Ethan Jacques was so very gentle!

First, there was the familiar argument about woman's nervous constitution and proofs of the disasters that always attended her disregard of her proper functions. He presented the spectacle of the modern woman out in the world of work and her condition of nervous disequilibrium and her general physical depletion and the growing tendency toward a cessation of her function of motherhood.

As brief as it was simple was his analysis of the feminine temperament that followed—the emotionalism that had such value biologically considered, such fatal consequences when it came into the broader mental life to which man was committed. "No, self-elected," interrupted Jaffey.

Even were this emotionalism only merely useless, it would not be justifiable, for a thing stands by its usefulness, and women were not capable of high and intense sentiments in the more abstract fields where man was the ardent and indefatigable toiler. Woman's labor and suffering were useful not

there, but in the home. It was for offspring and mate that *she* could bear pain and privation. In fact, only there would she bear them. Once she stepped from the fireside, she became selfish and erratic, fickle and unconcentrated.

But in the narrow, yet priceless, sphere where she was meant to reign, her capacity for sacrifice and suffering reached tremendous proportions. Here she must employ the energy given her, for which she would be held responsible by nature, the taskmistress who never forgets. Perhaps it was hard, but it was the truth. Woman was the bearer and the rearer; man the explorer and the soarer. She was circumscribed and personal; he was abstract and impersonal. A man would toil and suffer for a cause; a woman for offspring.

"A woman"—I now quote verbatim—"will boil in oil for her children, and glory in it, but for life in the abstract she won't so much as take a cold. She thinks she will, because she thinks man won't let her, but she never will because she never can—nature built her on other lines. It is nature's scheme for the perpetuation and advancement of the race."

"But," said Keel, disappointed, "it's not new."

"It's not true!" said Jaffey hotly. "It was true once, of course. Any one knows that. But as if women couldn't *change!* As if they couldn't *grow* a set of impersonal emotions, when they have the chance! If you chain 'em to the fireside, of course they'll stay narrow and personal. If you're kept in a prison, you're a prisoner. Oh, my Lord! It makes me so furious! Why, can't they see, these men, that if women bear men to advance, and bear women to bear more men to advance, it's not the race that advances; it's only a *sex?* So why don't they come out and say that nature perpetuates the race and advances the male?"

Keel shrugged and giggled.

"Who gave this to you?" she asked, indicating the brown-paper pamphlet.

"Doctor Roberts," said Jaffey shortly.

Keel laughed outright.

"Of course!" Doctor Roberts was an admirer of Jaffey's. "He knew it would set you against Jacques. But *I* say you'd better get these suffragist notions out of your head. It'll tell on your work if you don't."

"You're a primitive woman," said Jaffey coldly.

And likely Keel was just that. Else why should she have championed Jacques?

The author of this pamphlet was spoken of in *the* circles as a "coming man." He was like a planet, seen from afar and computed to arrive within a given time. One felt this coming-ness of his; he had all the manner of your true projectile. And with the air of having just traversed immense spaces, he now entered Ward Four. His eyes were keen behind his spectacles, and he had a very young, very projective growth of whisker, which did not slant, as do most whiskers, but stood off from his face, as if it, too, were en route somewhere.

He came to the desk to see the charts. Jaffey confronted him immediately.

"Doctor Jacques, why must you put your patient here?"

He had sat down and was writing rapidly. He looked up, regarding her greetingly.

"Well, if you must know—I want her to be in your care."

Jaffey flushed red. Never before had Jacques committed himself to the indorsement of any nurse. Perhaps he knew that she was flattered in spite of herself. He grinned up at her.

"Say, Miss Jaffey—a fellow gave me tickets to a Gilbert and Sullivan tonight. Will you go with me?"

Jaffey set down the thermometer. Her hand trembled.

"I—I thank you—but I guess I can't go."

"Why not?" He was bluntly disappointed.

Ah, how like him—expecting to have his own way even in this! Jaffey turned malicious.

"Well"— and she flicked before him the "Discussion of Destinies"—"just for *personal* reasons—that's all."

He recognized the pamphlet with a start. Then he leaned his elbow on the desk leisurely. When had any one ever seen Jacques leisurely? It made Jaffey quite nervous.

"Oh, now, I never said there weren't exceptions. Ah, don't say no! Not finally. Think it over till evening. We might have such fun! Suppose you could convince me?" He stood up in his needed-elsewhere manner, but even then he lingered to beam encouragement, as if he were offering her nasty medicine that he knew she was brave enough to swallow, and before she could say a word he was gone.

Keel had heard it all. Her eyes were like saucers as she gazed at the girl who was bold enough—and crazy enough—to refuse an invitation from Ethan Jacques. Jaffey turned on her hotly.

"*You'd* have *gone*, wouldn't you?"

"You bet your life I would!" said Keel, with conviction. "Aw, Jaffey—why, you know he's all right! Never mind that tract of his. Just think how wonderful he is—and how brave! You know how they say he's risked his life over and over again, and given quarts of blood and acres of skin and done epidemics—yes, and even went to care for a leper, only it turned out not to be one. And with children——"

"I know," said Jaffey uneasily. It was in the children's ward she had first met him.

At about two that afternoon a man was sitting in a self-wheeling chair in a certain path of the park, feeding squirrels and looking constantly down the path for some one he expected. He was a warped and twisted man, with an intellectual and extremely nervous face, the expression of which was at the same time peculiarly gentle. On the bench lay a medical journal with the leaves down.

He was Thomas Jacques, Ethan's brother. Every day that Ethan could manage it, the two met here for a little talk. Thomas was older than his brother. Fifteen years before, when he had been studying medicine, he had met with a railway accident between New York and Boston. The injuries that had put a stop to his career had not been received at the moment of the wreck, but had been the results of his heroic efforts to save other passengers. He had rescued a man in the last stages of tuberculosis, a negro lad going to a reform school, and a young girl who had told him, as he pulled her from the wreckage, that she was a wicked creature, running away with a married man. She had begged him to let her die and to save the man. It had been in saving her that he had been caught in the burning débris. Now—he lived in a wheel chair.

Ethan suddenly appeared down the path, approaching in his projective way. The face of Thomas lighted wonderfully.

"Well, *doctor?*" he cried.

"Well, *doctor?*" cried Ethan, with the same intonation. "Dear old Tom! How goes it to-day?"

"All right. How goes the hospital?"

"Bully!" Ethan sat down, laughing. The other was gazing at him with a look that said: "Is he not the coming man?" And yet Ethan was never so modest as in these moments with Thomas. It was his custom, after they had chatted a bit, to narrate the events of the day at the hospital and the minutiæ of the interesting cases, with which Thomas

was almost as conversant as he. In fact, the older man was, in this brother, reliving his own career, the career that had stopped fifteen years before. All his great zeal and budding skill he had merged in the zeal and skill of Ethan.

With what joy had he seen Ethan choose surgery, which had been his own choice! He read and studied, and Ethan supplemented the study with this daily narrative from the clinic, declaring that Thomas and he were really partners. But Thomas only smiled at that. It was not that they were partners, but that Ethan was both of them, realizing his own ambition and all that the other had lost as well. That was why Thomas kept so laboriously abreast —that he might comprehend and appreciate to the full Ethan's triumph when it came. And it was to come soon. Did not every one say it?

"And how," he asked, "is the difficult case?"

"Well," said Ethan dubiously, "not so well as I'd like. I'm sending her into another ward. She doesn't want to get well. If any one can handle a thing like that, it's Eleanor Jaffey."

"Jaffey?"

Thomas knew that name. He stole a look at Ethan. Ethan was gazing smilingly over the park, suddenly oblivious of medical matters. Now Thomas happened to be exaggeratedly jealous for his brother, and it was merely because of the great career. And once that career had been quite seriously threatened, all along of a nurse. The nurse had jilted Ethan. It had been two or three years before, but he had taken it hard, and for a time had acted as if careers didn't matter. One sees now where he got the bias that led him to write the "Discussion of Destinies."

Thomas may have fostered this attitude. Not that he wished Ethan to go through life without love, but he had received a fright he couldn't get over. It was time enough for love when Ethan should be settled and famous—when, in short, love wouldn't count as much as the career. It was selfish of Thomas, but when one has only a brother to live through, one loses perspective. Besides, Thomas, in his own medical days, had rather carried on with nurses, and he had got the notion that they were flirts.

Just as Ethan stood up to go, an expression of pain crossed his face fleetingly. He put his hand to his side and stared beyond the trees, as if, though his gaze were abroad, his thoughts were concentrated within. Then he laughed the whole world in the face, took affectionate farewell of his brother, and, erect and ongoing, set out for the hospital again.

Visitors' hours had come. Ward Four had transformed itself into a sort of county fair, with exhibits of fruit, food, flowers, and fancywork; and the conversation already drowned the noise of the "L" just outside.

The only cot unvisited was that of the new patient, who lay there by the desk quietly, just as she had lain since they had brought her to the ward. She was a beautiful woman. The card at the bedhead said, "Unmarried," and in the occupation space was written, "Teacher."

Jaffey, winding bandages, glanced down the ward. The "Discussion of Destinies" was still in her resentful mind.

"None of these women are really brave! Of course they suffer, but they like it; it's for offspring or mate. But suffering for a big, grand *cause*—no, they couldn't do that. It's only men who can rise as high as that! What is it?" she asked, rising quickly and going to the new patient, who, she thought, had summoned her.

"No, Miss Jaffey—I just want to talk. Let me—it makes me forget.

Tell me, what were you thinking? You're always thinking."

Jaffey touched the dark braids that lay so still on the pillow.

"Well, so are you, and you so ill!" Her eyes widened suddenly. "Ah, that's it! He's wrong! And I can prove it—I can prove it by you!"

"He! Wrong! What is it, dear Miss Jaffey?"

"Why, *you're* not circumscribed and personal! See, here you are all alone—no children—no mate—no one to suffer for—but how brave you are! Just on your own merits—just as *he* says we never are!"

"He?"

"Yes, your doctor—Doctor Jacques."

"Does he say women aren't brave?"

"Only for some one that belongs to them. Never for big outside motives—the way men are."

"And he's right," said the patient quietly. Jaffey's startled, incredulous look brought a smile to her face. She put out her hand and touched Jaffey's hand. "Yes, dear; he's right. I'm not being brave! I'm a coward to the marrow. Oh, yes, but I am! See, you tell me I must get well, but I don't want to—and I shan't. *There's no one to get well for!*"

"But your work!" cried Jaffey. "That fine teaching——"

"Yes, fine. But the children are not *mine*, dear. If they were—oh, yes, then I'd get well—I wouldn't even think about the pain of getting well. But Doctor Jacques is right. A woman must have an emotional prop. We'll suffer then."

Jaffey stood up, a firm expression on her face. "I don't believe you. You do care enough to try, and you'll try."

And because it was not good for the patient to talk, she left her. But she could not leave her own thoughts. And cheif among them was this problem about the Gilbert and Sullivan—whether to snub him by not going, or to go and have it out with him for once and all.

Visitors' hours passed while she debated. Then it came time for his second round, but Doctor Roberts took his place. Roberts was a capable but pedantic man, fond of technicalities, and called by the internes "Meddy Dick," short for "Medical Dictionary," because he talked like one.

At six, when Jacques had not appeared, Jaffey was piqued. At seven she was furious; his very self-assurance made it quite impossible for her to go now. He should learn he could not always have his way in that hospital, and particularly in Ward Four.

She had just turned over the charts to the night nurse when Keel came bursting into the ward, helter-skelter, in a state of intense and repressed excitement.

"Jaffey! Guess! *Guess* what's happened! Jacques is sick! They say it's appendicitis. My, but he's sick!"

It is difficult to describe the state of the hospital that night. A sense of calamity hung over it. That appendicitis was as common there as buttons on a coat made it no less portentous when its victim was Ethan Jacques. To imagine the hospital without him was like imagining the Constellation without the Big Dipper. The internes were baffled, but the nurses were overwhelmed. It was as if the powers that be had fumbled, and plainly the nurses took the attitude that if *they* had been running things, this clumsy error would not have occurred. But at least the error would be redeemed—the powers would not bungle so far as an operation. No self-respecting power could do that.

Indeed, the doctors hoped to pull him through without the operation. By next morning they were confident of this, if he had the proper care. And for that they turned, as one might have

guessed, to Eleanor Jaffey. In fact, Doctor Frith, who came to fetch her early that next day, said that Jacques himself had asked for her. And they all depended on her to bring him through.

Jaffey had somehow known that this would happen. She was so sure of it that she had even forced herself to sleep that night, to be in good condition when they sent for her. It had not been easy to sleep, either. Chaotic scarcely describes her state of feelings, for it was clearly a state of feelings, not of mind. She was amazed at this herself, and embarrassed, so that she even told herself it was a sort of suggested anxiety, got from the other nurses like an influenza. With like ingenuity, it was on the ground of professional pride that she explained to herself the eagerness with which she undertook the case of her fallen foe.

And at first he was so fallen that she entirely forgot the hostile feelings with which, only yesterday, she had regarded him. It was appalling somehow—this contrast between Jacques well and dynamic, and Jacques ill and prostrate. Indeed, he was very ill. For three days Jaffey wrestled to bring him past the danger of an operation. And she succeeded. She proved her skill. But he came out of the danger zone a weak and helpless man. With a certain trepidation I write those words "weak and helpless," because of what happened next, which I must here narrate because of its importance in the story. It is what happened to Jaffey, who was still taking care of him, at his own determined request.

By nature she was a singularly fair-minded girl, above such petty things as spite or revenge. Still, one must recall that if her animosity had been aroused by a certain pamphlet, it was not on behalf of herself, but of her sex, and that fact may somewhat mitigate what followed.

He had been impatient, of course. He did not know what to do with pain. She had been very gentle with him—sometimes she had even caught herself up in some too-patent solicitude. But on the fourth morning the situation was exactly reversed. It was Jacques who did not present the customary degree of recalcitration, and Jaffey who was brusque and unsympathetic. She came in that morning whistling, and tossed him a glance à la the internes, as it were, and set about her business matter of factly, as if it were dusting or frying chops. She stuck the thermometer under his tongue as if it had been a pin in a cushion, and never even glanced at him as he lay quite still, his eyes on her contentedly.

Relieved of the thermometer, he said: "You're a wonderful nurse, Miss Jaffey."

And she smiled breezily and impersonally, and said: "Oh, you'll do all right!" just like an interne, and she hummed as she fixed his medicine and went and talked with the nurses who were passing, and presently she disappeared for twenty minutes. She came back casually, expecting to find him fuming.

He did not fume! He just looked satisfied. She fixed the pillows, just to discommode him, but he said: "Oh, that's bully now—thanks!" And when she refused him water, he said: "Oh, yes, I know I oughtn't to ask for water." And he didn't say he was hot or cold, and he didn't toss and didn't swear; he just lay looking at her. So she got some medical books and buried herself in them, ignoring him for long, preoccupied spaces. Then she would look up and find his eyes on her.

So for two whole days. There was not a complaint out of him. If he groaned, he apologized, but he seldom groaned. Now Jaffey was much annoyed. She redoubled her efforts at being an impersonal, abstract nurse—

for, as you see, she aimed to give him a good dose of his own medicine. He vaunted the superior quality of man's broader sympathy, which could afford to be hard to the individual for the sake of being noble and self-sacrificing in the more general, universal way. That was why doctors couldn't nurse; they were thinking of the race at large, while a nurse was pouring out *her* feelings upon just the few cases under her care. Well, Jaffey was going to show him he had guessed wrong in her case. The only flaw was that he didn't seem to mind. Just so long as she was attending to him, he was perfectly content.

Also, she asked to go back to the ward. She reminded him of the new patient, who was not getting well. In fact, the new patient was much on her mind. At times she stopped in at the cot by the desk, smoothing the dark hair from the brow on which so much silent pain was written. The patient would look up and smile, shaking her head.

"I know, dear Miss Jaffey. I'd try to get well, just for you—if I just *could* try. But somehow I can't."

"But you must! You can, you know—and your sort is needed in the world."

"I know. But, you see, I told you I was a coward. And I am.'

Then Jaffey would go away, thoughtful. It seemed so terrible that this fine woman should want to die. And yet there were others in the hospital about whom Jaffey had wondered: "How can they want to live?" It was all so perplexing.

Then Jacques took the notion he could sit up. It was preposterous, and Jaffey told him so brutally. He subsided instantly. A little later he said:

"You don't mind being here, do you? You see, it's good for me to have you here. If you just knew *how* good, Eleanor—— See here, I'm going to tell you. I'm well enough to tell you, and I'm going to!"

He had taken her hand, but she pulled it away brusquely.

"You forget it, whatever it is," she said. "I've got enough on my mind. I'm studying."

"But, Eleanor—I want to tell you——"

"Come, come—don't be a softy!" she exclaimed. "I'll be thinking I'm in the women's ward. Remember you're a doctor."

At that moment people were suddenly coming in at the door—people who pushed a wheel chair, in which sat a warped man with a tense white face.

"Ethan!" cried the warped man, in tones of passionate love and distress. "They only just told me!"

"Tom!" cried Ethan. "Tom! But, old man, it's not anything to tell now. I'm well now!"

"Thanks to Miss Jaffey," said Doctor Roberts, who had come in with Thomas.

Thomas took Jaffey's hand and thanked her, but in his gratitude was something strange, like suspicion and vague hostility. Jaffey did not forget that look of nervous scrutiny, grateful and grudging. What beautiful eyes he had!

The brothers were left together.

When Jaffey came back, an hour later, Thomas had gone; one might almost have said that Ethan had gone as well. It was an ungracious Jacques she found now, sulky and feigning sleep, and, on awaking, brusque and doctorish. And he told her she ought to go back to the ward—just as if she hadn't been asking to go—nor did he express any regret at losing her. So naturally she expressed nothing but joy at going. Wherein she expressed something she did not feel.

True, she was glad to be in the ward again, but she kept on thinking about him, and what had happened just before his brother came. A man does not like to be called a softy, of course, but need

he have been so angry? No, not unless he was angry with himself. That was it—he was annoyed because in his weak condition he had let himself indulge in a bit of sentiment that he afterward regretted, and that was why he was so rude. He wanted her to understand he hadn't meant it. Very well, she wasn't dense; she could grasp his meaning. As a consequence, she avoided his room. But the nurse now in charge of him did give out that he was the most impossible patient she had ever nursed.

And then, a day or so after, the unbelievable thing happened. Jacques had a relapse.

He had sat up too soon, and eaten things he shouldn't. Now even Doctor Frith was nervous. And there was no hesitating this time about an operation. It was being arranged for even then.

Jaffey was sent for, to be in the room when he was brought from the table.

After that Jaffey was just fighting for a life. Not life, but *a life*. It was not impersonal, abstract; it was very personal, very precious. The preciousness was something detached, as it were, and there was a sadness connected with it somehow; but in the background it ruled her acts and thoughts; it gave skill to her hands, and a strange, supernatural cunning to her wits. It seemed to her, when she chanced to think anything so nearly connected with her own self, that she had never been a *nurse* before. It was as if she had been playing at nursing until now. This notion came only in subconscious flashes, but it was very vivid, and it startled her.

Sometimes another nurse relieved her, when she tried to rest and couldn't, because her energies were all in that room where she belonged, with the great fight. And they could not keep her away.

Once she was aware that his brother, the man in the wheel chair, had been brought. He remained in the hospital, and most of the time in the sick room, where his warped, helpless figure and his beautiful, frenzied eyes made another of the tragic notes in that great building. He watched Jaffey ceaselessly. He never spoke to her.

Ethan grew worse.

And as he grew worse, Jaffey's strength and skill grew more amazing. They hardly knew her. She had become silent, saving even the energy of her voice that it might go instead into the channels where it would be useful for *him*.

It was when they were making her rest once that Thomas was left alone with his brother. He wheeled the chair to the bed, and, leaning over, with his suffering eyes fixed on the white face, he said:

"Ethan! Ethan, my boy! Think of your work, lad! Think of *our* work! Won't you think of it, Ethan? *Our work!*"

Ethan opened his eyes, but they closed again wearily. A little later Thomas thought he heard him speak. Bending over again, he heard the faint voice speaking a name. It was Eleanor. Ethan was delirious for a time.

It was when, that night, Doctor Frith had left the room and Jaffey was standing perfectly still, a strange, far-away look in her eyes, that Thomas motioned to her. She went to him.

"Miss Jaffey—I want you to be honest. You *are* honest. Be so now. I wanted to pray to you to save him, but I saw long ago there was no need for that. Tell me, does his life matter to you? More than any other man's life?"

She was neither startled nor embarrassed, but, looking at him intently from those eyes where there was the same pain that lay in his own, she nodded slowly. Then, with her hands at her face, she left the room.

Instantly Thomas began to wheel his chair softly toward the bed. As if Ethan knew he had come, he opened his eyes. Thomas caught his breath—the expression was so different from the one he knew, a look of slipping off, of going-away-ness.

"Ethan!" said Thomas softly, but clearly. "Ethan! She loves you. She has just told me. Come, boy—now you'll get well, won't you? For *her?*"

There was a long moment; then Ethan's hand seemed to stir, and Thomas put his own trembling hand on it. And, looking into Ethan's eyes, he saw a little flutter, a faint quiver that was not going-away-ness, but oncoming-ness. It was the vaguest ghost of his old projective energy, but it was a ghost that meant to materialize.

And it did.

"Ah, Miss Jaffey, now you know what a coward I am, else I'd try to get well for you. For you and Doctor Jacques. It would be decent, but you see!" The patient looked up at her with a smile that went to Jaffey's heart.

That smile made Jaffey decide something.

"Listen," she said softly. "I'm going to tell you about some one who—might have been excused for giving up. A man who had an accident, and lives in a wheel chair. He has a brother, and he lives because of that brother—to give him love and encouragement, and to add something to that brother's life, because he thinks it so worth living. But he could have given up so easily; it has just been pain for him all the time. He was in a railway accident. It was years ago, but he saved lives.

"There was a girl he saved—that was how he got hurt. She told him she was bad—not worth the risk. Do you know, I've wondered often whether she knew what happened, and if just his braveness wouldn't have made her brace up and live a big life—to justify him, so to speak, for the risk? Oh, my dear, life *is* so big! And for you, with your wonderful work——"

The patient had grown very still, but Jaffey felt the sudden clutch of her hand.

"Tell me—where did this happen to this man?"

"It was between New York and Boston. Oh, it was years ago, fifteen years."

"And who is he, this man?"

"He's Doctor Jacques' brother. He comes here every day in a wheel chair."

The clutch loosened. Jaffey leaned forward quickly, for the patient had turned away her face. But now she opened her eyes, and Jaffey caught her breath when she saw the look in them.

"I'm going to get well!"

"Oh, my dear! My dear!" whispered Jaffey.

A little later the patient drew down the radiant face near to her own.

"Dear Miss Jaffey—maybe that girl he saved did live a fine life. We can think so, can't we?"

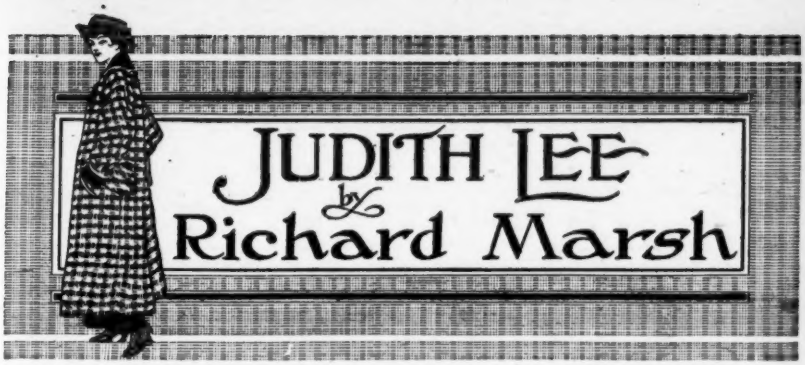
"I do!" said Jaffey.

"Speaking of *personal,*" said Ethan, "reminds me. I've something very personal to say to you. I've said it before, but I've a notion it needs polishing up. I want to practice it. Are you listening?"

Jaffey laughed, and probably blushed.

"Well, then—I love you. *I love you.* How does it sound *now?*"

But who can tell that save Jaffey?



AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.—Judith Lee is a teacher of the deaf and dumb. She uses the oral system—that is to say, she teaches by means of lip reading. To so great a degree of proficiency has she brought her mastery of the art of lip reading that in her case the sense of hearing is practically superfluous. In other words, she can hear without ears; she has only to see a person's face, to watch the movements of the lips, even from a distance, to know everything that is being said. The result is that often, against her will, she is forced to play a leading part in real, live dramas—and sometimes comedies—of the most extraordinary kind. The readers of the following adventures, taken at random from her various note books, will be able to judge of the truth of this for themselves.

THE GLASS PANELS

THE first time I took an active, intentional interest in a criminal matter, it was in what afterward came to be known as "the Fergusson case," and my association with that took ultimately what I cannot help calling a distinctly irregular form. The Fergusson case had also, for me, an unusual feature. I see people talking, and without hearing I know what they say. But, as I may safely assert that more than ninety per cent of what every one says is undiluted rubbish, this is rather a misfortune than a blessing. In the Fergusson case, on only three occasions did I see things spoken, and on each of those occasions, not only were the words uttered of importance in themselves, they were probably the most important utterances that their speakers, among very many thousands, had ever made.

I knew Dugald Fergusson very well, and his mother still better. His father was dead, and he was his mother's only child. He was what that respectable lady often spoke of as a "feckless loon"; in plainer Saxon, he was an impetuous, hot-headed young man of twenty-five or six, who, I dare say, meant well, but generally did badly. There was a time at which he favored me with his attentions; he gave me more than one opportunity of promising that I would be Mrs. Dugald. But, as on at least one of these occasions he had drunk more than was good for him, apart from all other considerations, the prospect was not a tempting one.

I had not seen anything of the Fergussons for some months when, happening to be in the neighborhood of their house one afternoon, I thought I would call and see the old lady. I found her in great tribulation. Something had happened to Dugald—he had disappeared; she had had no news of him for more than a fortnight. Unfortu-

nately it was not unusual for him to vanish without notice for two or three days at a time; but he had never before been away for so long as a fortnight. And in this instance his absence was the more remarkable because he had promised to take his mother away to visit a relation in the North, and the day that had been appointed for her to start had been passed more than a week. She was sure that something was wrong with him. She had thought of going to the police, but the fact was that he resented a too close interest in his movements, and she was only too well aware that the less she knew about some of his habits and companions, the happier she would be.

I tried to reassure her, but it was not easy. Anxiety had affected her health. Dugald had some friends named Hutchings. Mrs. Fergusson had an idea that if she could only get to see them and bore herself as a diplomatist, she might obtain from them some data that would put her on the track of her absent son. But she could not get to see them; rheumatism had crippled her so that she could hardly move from her chair. As I saw how she was fretting, I volunteered to see these people for her, and she gladly consented.

The Hutchings—there was a Mr. and a Miss Hutchings, who were brother and sister—lived at Mortlake. The following afternoon I paid them a call. They had rather a pretty cottage, although it was quite a small one. It stood in its own garden, and was so constructed that to a stranger it was not quite clear which was the front door. There were two or three doors. I went to one at the side, which had glass panels; it opened directly into a room. In the room a girl was writing. While I hesitated whether to knock or to find some other entrance, the door of the room was opened and a man entered, slamming the door to behind him with what I had no doubt was a bang.

His action had a singular effect upon the girl who was writing. She sprang to her feet, and she shrieked; then, when she saw who it was, she pressed her hands to her side, and I could see that she was trembling as with ague. The man's mouth was turned away from me, so that I could not see what he said, but I have no doubt he asked what ailed her, because I could see what she answered; she spoke with hysterical violence:

"You mustn't slam doors! You mustn't! That door—how it clanged! I'm always hearing it clanging, always! Every time a door is slammed, I hear it clang again. You must not slam doors unless you want to drive me mad."

Although not a sound was audible, I could see with what passionate intensity she was speaking. Before either of them could speak again, I rapped with the small brass knocker on which I had had my hesitating fingers. Both started at the sound, and stared at me.

"Who is it?" I saw the girl say.

The man said nothing, but he strode up to the door and looked at me through the glass panels. Then he opened.

"You should not have knocked here," he told me. "This is not the front door."

"But there's a knocker. I couldn't tell which the front door was."

"Oh, the knocker—I'd forgotten there was a knocker. That knocker is where it is owing to a practical joke of a friend of mine." He stared at the knocker as if he saw it with surprise. "Of course, there's a knocker." He turned to the girl. "Ellen, you've never had the knocker put back again."

"I had forgotten all about it," she replied.

I thought their conduct rather singular; and how they came to have forgotten the presence of a knocker on their own door was beyond me altogether. I told him my name and that I wanted

to speak to Mr. or Miss Hutchings. He asked me in, introducing himself as Mr. Hutchings, and the girl as his sister. I told him that I had come from Mrs. Fergusson, who was confined to her room by illness, and who would be very glad if he could give her any news of her son.

Both of them were silent. The girl sat down and resumed her writing. I wondered what she was writing, because, apart from the discourtesy of the act, I could see her hand shaking so that I was pretty sure whatever it was would be hard to read. Mr. Hutchings stood by the table, drawing patterns with the tips of his fingers on the cloth. Then he looked up at me.

He was not bad looking—he was, I suppose, about thirty years of age—but he had the appearance not only of one who lived an irregular life, but also of one who suffered from insomnia. Those caverns about his eyes meant sleeplessness, unless I erred.

"I have been wondering where Dugald is, Miss Lee, as much as any one, because, to speak quite frankly, he owes me money that ought to have been paid some time ago."

The girl looked up from her writing.

"He owes every one money," she said. I thought her tone was curiously sullen.

"I'll not go quite so far as that," rejoined her brother, "but he certainly does owe one or two, who have been promised their money and want it. I know that I want mine. As nothing has been seen of him in his usual haunts, we have been wondering—to be quite frank, Miss Lee, again—if he has been keeping away because he does not mean to pay us."

I received, to be brief, no information as to Dugald Fergusson's whereabouts from them. They both protested that they would like to hear of him from me, or indeed from any one; yet I came away from their cottage with the impression strong upon me that, if they had chosen, they might have told me much more than I could have told them.

Those words which I had seen the girl utter when her brother had slammed the door kept recurring to my mind. I repeated them to myself over and over again. What door was it that had clanged? Why did she always hear it clanging, so that every time a door was slammed she heard it clang again?

Those very odd words of hers about some particular door that had "clanged" might merely be the utterance of a hysterical young woman; yet I wondered.

Two days afterward I had a telegram from old Mrs. Fergusson, asking me to go to her at once. I went, putting aside my own business to do so. I found her, still tied to her chair, in a state of great excitement. She had found, among some of her son's papers, the address of a man of whom she had heard him speak, and to whom she had written. She had had a reply from the man, which she showed to me; it was because of this reply that she had telegraphed.

The letter was from a betting man, a bookmaker. It was rather a characteristic effusion:

22 Beaconsfield Avenue, Wandsworth.

DEAR MADAM: Your favor duly received. I have been wondering what has become of your son, myself. He is an old customer of mine, and I expected to see him or hear from him before this, because I owe him money. If he owed me money, as he often has done, the boot would be on the other leg—I should not have expected to see him or hear from him.

The last time I saw him was at Lingfield, at the spring meeting. He won off me close on five hundred pounds. He wanted me to pay him in cash, and I did give him three hundred, and was, of course, prepared to pay balance on settling day. I have always settled with him at the club. If he was not going to turn up in person, he has always let me know to what address to send the money. He did not turn up at the club, and I have had no address from him to which to send. Whenever he does turn up and wants the money, it is waiting for him.

Again thanking you for your favor, I am yours obediently, TOM BOWER.

I knew nothing of betting men, but I had a feeling, when I read that letter, that Mr. Tom Bower was a character.

"You see what he says about the Lingfield spring meeting," said the old lady, as soon as she saw that I had reached the end of the page. "That was the day on which he left me. He must have gone straight from here to the races. There are all sorts of bad characters about those race courses; sinks of iniquity, they are. If that Mr. Bower paid Dugald three hundred pounds, who can say what those race-course folk wouldn't do to get hold of a sum like that?"

I perceived her point, and realized that she was right enough. Men returning from a race course have been murdered for much less than three hundred pounds. The first thing we had to do, as I explained to Mrs. Fergusson, was to ascertain with whom he had gone to Lingfield, and, what was much more important, with whom he had probably left. She wished to make these inquiries from Mr. Bower, but for some reason that I could hardly have explained, I felt that, in the first instance, I would rather make them at that cottage at Mortlake. I had told the old lady about my fruitless visit there, but had said nothing about the strange words that I had seen coming from the girl's lips, nor about my odd feeling that the brother and sister knew more than they had cared to say.

"I will go," I told her, "first of all to Mortlake. Then, if I find out nothing of importance from either Mr. or Miss Hutchings——"

She interrupted me. "The girl knows nothing. How should the girl know anything? Dugald was never one for girls."

I had my doubts, but I did not contradict her. I merely observed that I had a sort of feeling that I should like to pay another visit to Mortlake. If I failed in that quarter a second time, I would then apply to Mr. Bower.

The next afternoon I paid a second visit to Mortlake. This time, when I reached the cottage, I did not hesitate. I went straight to the side door with the glass panels. I wondered whether the knocker was still there. It was not; but on the paintwork were the marks of the place where it had been. I was about to take the hint and go in search of the door to which the knocker had been removed, when, glancing through the panel, I saw Mr. Hutchings in the room on the other side. It was the middle of the afternoon, yet he was fast asleep. The explanation was within reach of his hand. On the table close to his chair was a hypodermic needle. Such a stage, it seemed, had his insomnia reached that he had to resort to desperate means to get a snatch of sleep even in broad day.

Yet, although he had drugged himself, his sleep was not undisturbed. He was in what seemed to me a very uncomfortable position, in a great armchair. Though it was not turned toward the door at which I was standing, I could see his face very clearly. He appeared to be in the grip of a nightmare, in which he was suffering unknown terrors. He was talking in his sleep; broken words were coming from his lips, so broken that they were unintelligible even to me. Presently he sat more upright in the chair, in a sort of spasm, and at least part of a sentence was formed by his lips:

"Don't go by Three Bridges! Don't go!"

The words burst from him with what seemed to be a muscular effort so acute that it woke him up. His eyes opened. He looked gapingly about him, as people do when suddenly aroused from haunting dreams.

I did not wait to see what followed—I did not announce my presence. I withdrew as unnoticed as I had come.

I went home and hunted up a time-table and maps of Surrey and Sussex. With their aid I strove to make sense of the few words that had escaped from Mr. Hutchings in his dreams. He had said: "Don't go by Three Bridges! Don't go!" What baleful vision had forced him to say it? The words in themselves were simple, innocent enough; yet I had seen with what agony they had been wrung from him. Something tragic was underneath them, I felt sure. I made it my business to learn what that something was.

Three Bridges station, as a station, I knew very well; I had often passed through it on the road to and from Brighton. But from the time-table I learned something more—I found that it was one of the routes by which one could return from Lingfield. The direct route from London was via Croydon and Oxted, but one could, if one preferred, go on to East Grinstead and return to London by Three Bridges. It was rather a roundabout way, but not necessarily much the worse on that account; nor, it seemed, if one caught connecting trains, was it bound to take much longer.

Nothing had been seen or heard of Dugald Fergusson since Mr. Bower had paid him that three hundred pounds on Lingfield race course. Mr. and Miss Hutchings had both denied that they knew anything of his whereabouts; but in their statements I had no faith whatever. Miss Hutchings had spoken of a door that had "clanged" so ominously that it still haunted her a fortnight afterward. Her brother, in the agony of a dream, had implored some one not to go by Three Bridges; I wondered why. I had two or three free days. I decided to devote them in making inquiries, on lines of my own, as to the route by which Mr. Dugald Fergusson had returned from Lingfield.

I began with Lingfield itself, a straggling country village, and, as I had expected, learned nothing there. Then I went by train to East Grinstead, which seemed to be quite a flourishing town, and still learned nothing; then, still by train, to Three Bridges, a mere handful of not particularly prepossessing modern cottages, and still achieved no results.

That occupied the first day. On the second I tried another method. I had noticed, while traveling from East Grinstead to Three Bridges, a distance of some seven or eight miles, that the train passed leisurely through what, for the most part, was a garden of wild flowers. I spent the night at Three Bridges. The next morning, following directions I had received, I found myself, after some little walking, in a narrow lane that passed under a railway arch. There was a stile on my left, which I crossed; then I scrambled over a fence, up a bank, and gained access to the line. I proposed to explore, on foot, until I was turned off, the strip of railway line between East Grinstead and Three Bridges. If any one tried to interfere with me, I proposed to attribute my presence there to a desire to gather wild flowers.

I have seen it stated somewhere that the strips of land running beside railway lines are the only places left in England in which wild flowers can be seen at their best. Certainly I never saw them in greater profusion than on the piece of line I traversed that morning. Trains were not frequent. One—a motor train—went bustling by while I was on the top of a bank sampling what seemed to be a thicket of fern; another—a luggage train consisting of three empty wagons and an engine—passed in the other direction as I was gathering watercress from a tiny stream as clear as crystal. I was enjoying myself hugely, forming a famous posy of pretty wild things, but I had achieved nothing toward the end I had in view.

I reached a spot where the line ran

between high banks, carpeted with wild flowers. A little distance ahead, an archway carried a road across. When I gained this archway, I saw, coming along the line toward me, a man, evidently a workman, carrying a tool of some kind over his shoulder. There was a footpath of sorts leading up the bank to the road above, and I thought it might be advisable to use it before that workman came up and ordered me off.

In the bank, some nine or ten feet above the line, was a sort of shelf. As I reached it, I was seized by a most curious sensation of dizziness. The arch, which was made of brick, rose from that shelf—that is, its outer span. In the brickwork itself, directly fronting me, was a door, an iron door. What caused my dizziness was that the sight of that door recalled Miss Hutchings' words—it was just the kind of door that would clang, and it was on the road from Lingfield to London, via Three Bridges.

In spite of the odd feeling of bewilderment occasioned by the discovery of a door in such an unexpected place, I was perfectly conscious that my imagination had a tendency to move too fast, and that I might be on a false track altogether. So conscious was I of this that my second impulse was to continue my ascent up the path and gain the road before the advancing workman was upon me. As I moved, my foot struck against something. I looked down. There was something shining in a cluster of anemones. I picked it up. It was a gold locket. I had just time to conceal it in the palm of my hand when the workman was upon me, a big, round-shouldered man, with a pronounced stoop and a ragged black beard. He addressed me very civilly:

"You know, miss, you are trespassing here. The public aren't allowed upon the line. There's a notice board to say so."

"I have been stealing your flowers," I told him, holding out my posy, but saying nothing about what was in the palm of the other hand. "What quantities of wild flowers you seem to have! Surely you can spare some."

"There's no doubt about that, miss, as far as sparing goes. You're welcome to the flowers, but it's against the rules to allow trespassing on the line. If people get hurt, or maybe killed, by passing trains—it's very easy—they blame the company, and that's where it is. No trespassing is allowed; it wouldn't do."

"I was wondering," I said to the man—he seemed to be a decent creature and not indisposed, even in the execution of his duty, for a little conversation—"what that door is doing in the brickwork of your arch. Isn't it rather a queer place in which to put a door? Is there anything on the other side of it?"

"I was wondering," he replied, "how it comes to be closed. The last time I saw it, it was wide open enough. They have been putting fresh clinkers in the six-foot way, and it coming on to rain, some of the chaps left their tools under cover. When they came for them a day or two after, they couldn't get at them because the door was shut. That's more than a fortnight ago, and they've been there ever since. I told them I'd get the key and unlock the door. They'll be coming along directly to get their tools again—the company's tools they are."

I saw now that he had a huge iron key in his hand. His words had increased my feeling of dizzines. He did not know how the door came to be closed; it had been wide enough open when he had seen it last; then it had been shut on the workmen's tools. It was rather more than three weeks since Dugald Fergusson ought to have returned from Lingfield. Might not his more than a fortnight mean more than three weeks? I watched him fitting his monstrous key into the clumsy lock with

sensations of which he certainly had no notion—and I slipped the gold locket between the buttons of my blouse.

When at last he had succeeded in opening the door, he stood for a moment looking at what was beyond him; then he exclaimed:

"What's this? In God's name, what's this?"

I knew before he told me. His tone gave me all the information I wanted—and more. On the other side of that iron door—which rang with a clanging sound each time he touched it with his key—in the chamber formed by the brickwork of the arch, was all that was left of Dugald Fergusson.

I have no wish to dwell on unpleasant details. One glimpse of him was too much for me; a hint will probably be enough for others—he had been lying there, dead, for more than three weeks.

While we were still in doubt as to what had better be done, four other workmen came along the line in search of the tools that the company provided for their use. The man with the key, who had made the discovery, appeared to be a ganger. Acting on his orders, two or three of the others set off to give information, in the proper official quarter, of what had been found; two of them remained with the ganger to keep watch and ward; and I was allowed to go. It never entered the heads of any of those men that I could have any possible connection with the grim discovery. The ganger saw the condition to which it had reduced me—how white I had grown, how unhappy I looked—and he said, with awkward kindness:

"This ain't no place for you, miss. If I was you, I'd take myself off. You don't want to get mixed up in anything like this."

I most decidedly did not—at least, at that particular moment. I had found out all I wished to find out there; further discoveries would have to be made in another direction, unhampered by official interference. I climbed with uncertain steps up the remaining portion of the precipitous bank, gained the roadway, and walked rapidly along what was little more than a cart track through the fields to the road at the other end.

Just before I reached the road, on one side of the cart track, was a little spinny, formed, I believe, for the most part, of firs and beeches. Under the shade of this I paused; there was no one about. I took the locket from my blouse. It was of gold, flat, large, and oval-shaped. I opened it. My portrait was inside.

I could scarcely believe, for an instant, that it was my portrait. Then I remembered. I had given his mother my photograph. She had told me once, half jestingly, that Dugald had stolen it. I could hardly ask him to return it, so I had taken no notice of what his mother had said. It looked as if he had cut my head out of the photograph and fitted it into the locket.

I went straight back to town, with the locket in my hand bag—which I had retrieved at Three Bridges station. I reached Victoria Station at four o'clock. An hour later I was entering the garden of the Mortlake cottage. It was my intention to strike while the iron was hot. I had been told by some one of whom I had asked the shortest road that there were two ways of reaching the cottage—one by an alley that entered the garden at the back; the other by the main road, along which I had gone on my two previous visits. I chose that way again.

I went, without hesitation, to the side door with the glass panels. There were two persons in the room beyond—Miss Hutchings, and a man whom I recognized as an acquaintance of Fergusson's to whom he had introduced me, and whose name, if I remembered rightly, was Pomeroy. It was an instant or two before I recalled who he was; he presented such a curious spectacle. The

whole of his head was enveloped in bandages, so that his face looked out of a sort of frame. I recalled him as a big, fine-looking young man, by whose manner and appearance I had been favorably impressed. Now, with those ghastly bandages around his head and his colorless face, he looked like some huge ghost. Evidently he had just risen from a bed of sickness. I was not sure that he ought not to have been on one then. He was clearly so weak that it was with difficulty he stood on his feet.

I was so struck by the contrast he presented to the handsome, debonair person I had known that, before I could carry out my intention of announcing my presence, I saw his lips form words that caused me, almost involuntarily, to stay my hand.

"What's become of Fergusson? For God's sake tell me, Nell!"

He asked the question as if his life depended on the answer. He was so weak that, as he asked it, the tears rolled down his cheeks. For some reason or other, the man was but a caricature of what he had been. He was a pitiable spectacle. The two were standing sideways to the door, so that I could see both their faces quite clearly. The girl's was white and tense and drawn; it struck me that she was making a great effort to bring herself to a desired point. Her lips moved once or twice, but I was sure that no words came from them; it looked as if her throat were so parched that, for the moment, she was incapable of speech. Then I saw her say—and such a look came over her face!—"Fergusson's dead."

"Dead? Then—it wasn't a dream!"

"I wish it had been!"

"Nell——" He just uttered her name, and then stopped. I could see his muscles working underneath his skin. "You know, Nell—I've been very queer." She nodded; apparently she could not trust herself to speak. "I've been—in bed over there, having an awful time."

"I know. I—I've been having an awful time, too."

"I—I suppose I've been unconscious for I don't know how long. I wish I'd remained unconscious. When I got my senses back, I began to try to think of what had happened, and—I haven't been able to." The man shut his eyes; on the girl's face was such a look of pity! His eyes were still closed as he asked her a question, as if he were afraid to look her in the face while she answered it. "Nell, who killed him?"

If he had seen the look on her face as she struggled to answer, I believe that even he would have been startled. Her lips moved several times; it was only after a perceptible interval that two words came from them:

"You did."

Then he opened his eyes and looked.

"Nell! For God's sake don't say that! Don't say it!"

"You asked me, so I had to tell you."

The big man looked at her, then he sank to the chair by which he was standing, laid his head on the table, and cried—not like a child, but like no one I had ever seen cry before. His were not sobs; they were convulsions. The girl stood watching him. Although she was dry-eyed, I did not doubt that her emotion was almost as great as his. She touched him on the shoulder. I saw words come from her, as if by a series of shocks.

"George, please—please don't do that! You—you'll make yourself ill again. Don't, George, don't! Please—please don't!"

But sobs continued to shake his great frame just as before. Then I saw a change come over her face, a surprising change, as if something had entered into her all at once and made of her another woman. She still had her hand upon his shoulder. Now she bent down and said, speaking quite calmly, with no

outward show of emotion, save for the strange, new look in her eyes:

"George, you mustn't cry. You have no reason to cry. What I told you was not true. You did not kill Dugald Fergusson."

I could not tell how loudly she had spoken. Not a sound reached me; not a sound seemed to have reached him. He still cried on. So she knelt on the floor beside him, and the sun, shining through a window, seemed to add a new beauty to her face.

"George, listen to me—listen! What I told you was not true. You did not kill Dugald Fergusson. Don't you hear me, George?"

It seemed that time that he did. He lifted his tear-stained face, all blurred with weeping, with the tears still on it, and he looked at her with his half-blinded eyes.

"You are only saying that—to comfort me."

There was a great gulp in the middle of his sentence. She moved a little closer, so that their faces were nearly touching.

"I'm not, George. I'm saying it because it's true. What I said before is untrue. You did not kill Dugald Fergusson. You never touched him."

"Who killed him, then?" I could see him ask.

And she replied: "I did."

There was silence in the room; silence so profound that I was conscious of it even where I was. I held my breath, as if fearful of intruding on what, to both the persons I was watching, must have been an awful moment. Presently he asked her, still in a whisper, with his face so close to hers:

"Is that true, Nell?"

"Perfectly true, George."

"You—did kill him?"

"I did kill him." It was strange what resolution was on her face, and how unfaltering her tone was. He seemed to doubt her, staring at her as if he would look into her soul.

"You are sure you killed him?"

"Quite sure. I wish I weren't. I've never had a happy moment since."

"Why did you say that I killed him?"

"Because—because—— Oh, George!" She gave a great sigh. "Saying that was worse than killing Dugald. When I saw that you didn't know who killed him, I thought I might escape that way." Her face was lit by the queerest, wanest smile. "I think, George, if you could have killed me, I might have been happy. I suppose you couldn't."

He drew himself a little away from her, and he said, three times over: "I don't understand! I don't understand! I don't understand!" speaking as a man might who was groping for light in a fog.

She replied: "And yet it's perfectly simple."

I think she was going to add something more, but her ear heard a sound that mine did not catch. Evidently he had heard it, too, for they both remained in an attitude of listening. Then the door at the back opened, and the girl's brother came in. I took it that he had entered the house by the gate leading out of the alley at the back. I had not been conscious of his approach. He had not stopped to remove his cap; his agitation was such that he was apparently still unconscious that it was upon his head. He stared at Pomeroy in seeming surprise.

"So you're here, are you? I'm pleased to see you. I've been wondering where you'd got to."

Pomeroy did not answer. The girl seemed to see something behind her brother's agitation. She asked him:

"Edward, what is the matter?"

He rested both his hands on the edge of the table and leaned over it toward them, and I saw him say:

"They've found him!"

That was all he said, and the girl, at

least, did not seem to need any more. She looked at him with comprehension in her eyes, and again there was silence in the room.

I personally did not know what to do. I was so absorbed by the tragedy being enacted on the other side of those glass panels that I had become oblivious of the purpose that had brought me there. It may seem strange that I had been so long unnoticed; as a matter of fact, it was not. About the door was trained a fine wistaria, which, at that period of the year, was a mass of leaves and flowers. I had only to draw myself a little back into the foliage to become nearly invisible to those within. And, moreover, they were so engrossed in the dreadful thing of which they talked that, wholly unsuspicious that any one was in the neighborhood, they had no faculty of observation left for me.

The tragedy continued to be played inside that little room while I still hesitated as to what course of action to pursue; willy-nilly I had to play the part of audience. Never before, I think, had I been so conscious of the strange nature of that gift of mine, which enabled me, without hearing a sound, to become a sharer of the secrets that these three people supposed they were telling only to each other.

A motor car was passing on the other side of the privet hedge when the silence was broken by the girl. She got up from her knees, she looked her brother in the face, and she asked him, in tones that I judged did not falter:

"Do you mean that they have found Dugald Fergusson?" The expression on his face was apparently for her a sufficient reply. "How came that door to be opened?"

"I don't know. I can't say. I went down to Rowfant, meaning to see how Pomeroy was getting on, and I found he was missing. They told me he had got up this morning and insisted upon going away. They had told him he was not in a fit state to go, but he had insisted. They did not know where he had gone; he had refused to tell them. When I left Cooper's cottage and was walking to the station, some children who were coming home from school stopped me and informed me, quite gratuitously, that Mr. Garnett had just found—I learned afterward that Mr. Garnett is a ganger—a dead man in an arch on the railway line. They seemed to think they were giving me quite a pleasant piece of news. By the time I reached the station, it was all over the place. They even knew that his name was Fergusson; some envelopes with his name and address had been found in his pockets. I don't know what is the usual course in these cases, but I suppose a warrant will have been issued by now."

"Whose name will be on it?"

This question was asked by the girl. Her brother looked at her sharply, as if he read intention behind her words. He answered:

"How do I know? Some poor devil's, I suppose."

She, perceiving that he had misunderstood her, proceeded to explain:

"You needn't be afraid of speaking plainly. George knows."

He started, as if her words took him by surprise; for the moment his back was toward me, so that I could not see what he said. But her answer enabled me to guess. I saw her say: "I told him."

Hutchings plumped down onto a chair, staring at her as if the statement she had made was wholly beyond his comprehension. Pomeroy asked:

"Is it true—what she says?"

The girl said: "You can tell him, Edward."

Hutchings inquired of Pomeroy: "What has she said?" Then of the girl: "What have you told him?"

The girl replied: "I've told him that I killed Dugald Fergusson."

She and Pomeroy both waited for Hutchings to speak. He thrust his hands into his trouser pockets, as men so often do in all sorts of unexpected moments; then he tilted back his chair, and I saw him say:

"That's true enough—worse luck! Though why she told you beats me altogether."

Pomeroy looked at her; then he held out his hands, as if he would take her in his arms. But she drew back.

"Don't touch me! Don't come near me! I'm going to tell you exactly how it was. Don't interrupt me, and don't speak a word until I've finished. Edward, here, will tell you if I speak a word that isn't true." Pomeroy made as if to speak, but the girl motioned him to be silent with an impatient movement of her hand. "Don't you say a word until I've done—till I've quite, quite done. Then you can say what you like. I want to get my thoughts in order, so that I can tell you everything just as it happened."

She stood for a moment as if thinking, both men watching her; her brother with his chair tilted back and both hands still in his pockets; Pomeroy with one hand resting on the table, as if in need of its support. It was strange to watch the lights and shadows that passed across his tear-stained face, and the changes that took place in it as the girl proceeded with her story. The play of varied emotions on her face fascinated me as nothing of the kind had ever done before. I felt, before she began to speak, that she was standing there as a witness of truth. As I saw her lips form words that came from her as if they had been drops of blood drawn from her heart, she impressed me with the conviction that her one desire was to give accurate expression to facts. If, sometimes, strength of feeling made the words that she chose seem strong ones, considering the theme on which she was engaged, it was not strange.

"You remember the morning when he came and wanted us all to go to Lingfield? You haven't forgotten that? You can speak."

She made a little gesture that seemed meant to give Pomeroy permission to use his tongue.

"I do remember so much."

"You had been spending the night, and were just going when he came. He had been drinking, though it wasn't eleven o'clock. He made such a fuss that we all agreed to go. I stood out. I wanted to do some work. But he made me go, too. While I was upstairs getting ready, he took the knocker off the front door and put it on the one with the glass panels—that one."

She waved her hand toward the door outside which I was standing. I drew back quickly, but none of the trio even glanced in my direction; they took what she said for granted.

"Edward was very angry when he found what Dugald had done; it was such a fool's trick. There was very nearly a quarrel before we started. Dugald kept drinking all the way to Lingfield, every chance he had. By the time we reached the course, he had had more than enough. He betted—Edward told me afterward that he betted recklessly."

Her brother remarked, chair still tilted, hands still in his pockets:

"Reckless wasn't the word for it. He betted like an idiot—backed outsiders at short prices, most of it with Tom Bower. I fancy Bower thought he had a soft thing on, but he hadn't. I'm not sure, but I fancy that everything Fergusson backed came off. It was one of those days of miracles that every fellow knows. Then he began ragging Bower about payment; he wanted cash. It ended in Bower giving him three hundred pounds in bank notes. He was to have the balance, whatever it was, on the usual settling day. There would have been a fight if Bower hadn't met him. He was spoiling for a row."

The girl took up the thread of the story where her brother had dropped it.

"That three hundred pounds was his undoing. We had a fine time of it. I wanted to go a dozen times, but he wouldn't let me. I wish I had gone!"

"There would have been a free fight if you had." This from her brother.

"That would have been better than what followed."

"I'm not so sure. He looked like murder then. He generally did when the drink was in him."

"You know what he was like when, as Edward says, the drink was in him. We missed the special train from Lingfield; then we took a local one to East Grinstead. There he started drinking again at the refreshment room on the platform, treating all who would be treated. I believe he gave the girl behind the bar a sovereign."

"He did. Then he wanted to toss her for another. When she declined, he began to make hay of all the things on the counter. He was stark mad by the time he got into the train."

"He was. Oh, how ashamed I felt! I was pretty mad myself. Do you mean to say, George, that you don't remember what trouble we had getting him into the carriage?"

"I've some hazy recollection. It may all come back some day, but at present it's just haze. Was I sober? I've been haunted by a sort of horrid idea that I had been drinking."

"He made you—he made us all drink something. I don't know how many times he paid for drink for me that I never touched. I can't quite say how much you'd had, but you and Edward were both perfectly sober. In the train his mood changed. He had a big gold locket on his watch chain. In it was a portrait of a girl—he insisted on showing it to us—the girl of whom he was always talking, whom he used to call 'the miracle worker'—Judith Lee."

Judith Lee winced outside the window; it was so strange to see oneself spoken of like that! "Miracle worker" he had called me. I felt as if I were in a place of miracles then. The girl went on; I began to find that I had played a part on that memorable night of which I had never dreamed.

"The stuff he spouted about Judith Lee! To begin with, she was the most perfect creature the world had ever seen. He told us, with tears in his eyes, that he had asked her again and again to be his wife. Then he began to storm at her, at the top of his voice, because she had very wisely refused his offer. The language he used! He worked himself into a blind rage. Then he wrenched the locket off his watch chain and threw it out of the window—and the very moment he threw it, the train stopped.

"I have often thought how queer that was. I suppose the explanation was that the signals were against us, and that the train had been slowing down without our noticing it. But it seemed to Dugald that the stopping of the train at that particular moment was a miracle caused by his throwing the locket through the window. Before we had guessed what he was going to do, he opened the door and fell out onto the line. You jumped after him to see if he was hurt, and Edward went after you. I was left alone in the compartment. I couldn't have that—I had no ticket, no money, no anything. So I went after the rest of you."

She paused for a moment, as if to visualize, to reconstruct what must have been a singular scene.

"Two things about that business have since struck me as odd. I didn't close the carriage door—I wonder what they thought when the train came into the station with the door wide open. Then I don't believe we were seen—that any one in the whole train knew that four people had got out and been left standing on the line. I can only explain that

by an idea which has since occurred to me—I believe that, with the exception of ourselves, the train was empty; certainly the latter part of it in which we were. Very few passengers got in at East Grinstead, and I dare say they all got out at the two stations at which we stopped. Possibly the engine driver was looking for the signals on the other side of the line, and the guard had got his head out on that side also. Anyhow, there is the fact that we four got out, the train went on and left us standing on the line, and no one seems to have been aware of it—not even to this hour."

Again she stopped; her eyes seemed to be looking at something at a distance which yet she saw quite plainly.

"I shall never forget the place in which we were—how it looked in the moonlight. The line ran between two high banks. Close to us it was spanned by an arch which, with the moon shining behind it, looked quite beautiful. One of the strangest parts of it all was that I noticed distinctly that in the side of the arch was an open door, and I wondered what was beyond it. I must have noticed all this in the flash of an eye, because—directly I realized that the train had actually gone—I had something else to occupy me.

"You and Edward had helped Dugald to his feet, but he had misunderstood the situation. He was fighting, mad drunk, and, though he did not seem to be seriously hurt, I dare say he was pretty well shaken. He was under the impression that you had pushed him out of the carriage. He swore that he would kill you for it, and he proceeded to do his best to put his threat into execution. You know what a great, strong man he was, and how impossible it was to do anything with him when he was excited and bent on some act of wrongheadedness."

"He carried his drink worse than any man I ever met," struck in her brother. "He was one of those men who ought to have been a teetotaler from his cradle. No one's life was safe who came near him when the drink was in him."

As the girl continued, as if unconsciously, she illustrated her narrative with gestures that lent it a grim significance.

"On the bank, close to the line, some workmen had left their tools—iron crowbars, and things of that kind. Fergusson was struggling with you, swearing he would kill you, when all of a sudden he stopped and picked one of these up; it looked like a long bar of metal. He struck you with it on the shoulder. You went down with a crash, and when you were down, without giving you a chance to get up, or to move, or to defend yourself, he struck you again and again. We couldn't stop him—he was a madman, and he meant murder. Edward clung to his arm, but he shook him off as if he were nothing. I suppose madness had made him stronger than ever."

"You must remember one thing," interposed her brother. "He was above and I was below. I couldn't get at him. He didn't give me a chance to get onto the bank where he was—there wasn't time."

"But I got onto the bank, and I snatched up another of those iron things. I could hear the thud the thing he had made each time it came down on you. I wasn't going to stand there and see you beaten to a pulp—so, as I tell you, George, I caught up one of those iron things. It was a great, heavy thing, and it was all I could do to lift it; but I did lift it, and I struck him with it—I don't know where. I struck blindly. My only thought was to stop him striking you. And he went tumbling down—and that's all I remember. I think I fainted."

"You did faint, for the first, and I hope for the last, time in your life." This, of course, was her brother.

"When I came to, Edward was bending over me. The first thing he said was that Fergusson was dead. At first we thought you were dead, too; but you moved, so we knew you weren't—quite. But Edward said that Dugald had never moved after I had struck him."

The girl passed her hand before her eyes, as if to brush away something that she did not wish to see.

"We had to do something. We couldn't stop there and do nothing. I was clear-witted enough by then. I looked around, trying my hardest to think of the best thing to do, and I saw that open door—the door I had noticed at one side of the arch. I went up to it. Edward asked me what I was going to do. I said: 'I'm going to see what's in here.' Beyond the opening it was all in shadow. I couldn't see what was there, but I could see that there was plenty of room. I said: 'We'll put Dugald in here.' And we did, Edward and I between us. And when he was in, I pushed the door to, and it shut—with a clang. I shall never hear a door shut again without that clang coming back to me."

The first words I had seen her say recurred to me—those first words which had put me on the scent of Dugald Fergusson.

"Edward said to me, when the door had shut: 'They'll hear that down the line. You'll have them onto us.' I don't know if they did hear it, but we saw no sign of any one. Edward knew that part of the world quite well."

"I used to stay there a lot when I was a kid," explained her brother. "I used to know every creature for miles around. There weren't very many to know—anyhow, in my time."

"He remembered that an old racing man, whom he knew very well, used to live close to there."

"Cooper," explained her brother, "used to be in a stable over at Lewes—a training stable. Got damaged by a horse and took a job as under-gamekeeper on some shooting near Rowfant—which, of course, was close to where it all happened. His cottage wasn't more than a hundred yards from that cutting. I knew he was the sort of chap who would ask no questions and keep his mouth shut, so——"

His sister continued, taking the words almost out of his mouth:

"So we carried you up the bank and to Cooper's cottage—it wasn't very easy—and we left you there. Mrs. Cooper had been a nurse and knew something about dressing wounds, and she started dressing yours at once. Mr. Cooper undertook to go at once for a doctor and tell him some cock-and-bull story about your having been in a row, and I don't know what besides. I wanted to wait and hear what the doctor had to say, but Edward would not let me. We walked to Three Bridges station and caught a late train uptown. And you've been at Cooper's cottage ever since; and Edward and I have been here; and we have both of us been haunted. Edward hasn't been able to sleep, and I—I have been haunted, whether asleep or awake. And now it seems that you are better, and Dugald has been found. So all that remains for me to do is to go and deliver myself up to the police and let them hang me."

She made a movement as if she would have started upon that errand then and there. Pomeroy caught her by the arm. He seemed to have gained vigor since I had seen him first, to be better able to play the man—as if the story the girl had told had braced him.

"You'll do nothing of the kind! They wouldn't hang you if you did. No judge or jury would ever find you guilty of having done anything wrong. What you did was to prevent murder."

"But I did kill Dugald Fergusson."

"To save my life, and all the rest of

my life I'm going to devote to proving to you that I'm not ungrateful. I'll never go on to a race course again, and I'll never touch another drop of drink. But I'll make no protestations; I'll do —or at least I'll try to do." He drew himself up straighter, and I could see what a big man he was. "Nell, you're going to be my wife."

"Your wife! George! When—when ——" She held out her hands in front of her, as Lady Macbeth does in the play, as if to show the stain that was on them, which nothing might ever remove. He took her hands in his and drew her to him.

"Well, you're going to be my wife. We'll be married to-morrow."

"To-morrow? George! Are you—are you daft?"

Her face was toward me, and I could see how she was trembling. I have no doubt he held her closer to stay her tremors.

"I tell you we'll be married to-morrow. People can be married in four-and-twenty hours, and you and I will be. Listen to me! Now you keep still until I've finished. You know I've got a goodish bit of money. I can get hold of all of it to-morrow if I want it. You and I are going to emigrate; we're going to start afresh in a new world—and start fair. And, please God, Nell, we'll continue fair, and keep the slate clean. Edward, why shouldn't you come with us? You're as movable a man as I am; you can get everything shipshape in a few days. Come with us. Nell and I will be married to-morrow, and we'll start next week for Australia. I know something about things out there. It's a real white man's country. Edward, come with us. There's nothing to keep you here."

Mr. Hutchings lowered the front legs of his chair to the ground; he got up; he took his hands out of his pockets—and he stretched them above his head, as a man might do who is trying to rouse himself from the heaviness of sleep.

"You're quite right, my boy—there's certainly nothing to keep me here—and wouldn't I like to come! But I'm a householder and a man of property. This cottage isn't much, but it is my own, and all the things that are in it. How is it to be done? Especially in the time you talk about."

"I tell you it is to be done, and I'll show you how." Mr. Pomeroy banged his fist upon the table with sudden vigor. "Nell and I together will show you how it's to be done." Each second he seemed to be growing more and more of a man. A thought all at once occurred to him. "Nell, you've never kissed me—never once in all your life. You're going to kiss me now."

I moved quietly back from that door with the glass panels, along the little garden path, into the main road on the other side of the privet hedge, and so away from Mortlake.

I might have stayed their going, but I did not. I might have gone to the police and told them this, that, and the other; but I did nothing of the kind. That was the first criminal case in which I had intentionally meddled, and I proposed to conduct it on lines of my own, and I did. What I had seen through that door with the glass panels was not evidence. I had not heard a single word; I had not been witness of a single act; I might have misunderstood everything that had been said in that little room. I might be tolerably satisfied that I had done nothing of the kind, but my satisfaction was not evidence; I could produce no proof.

I have since learned, by what one may call a side wind, that those three people did go to Australia, and are there still, doing very well; that they promise to be good and faithful citizens, a credit to the land of their adoption. With all

my heart I wish them well; my hopes and my prayers are with them.

So far as I am aware, the Fergusson case remains a mystery. How his body came to be in that strange hiding place has never been made clear, or how he came by his death. That the object could hardly have been robbery was established by the fact that in his pockets were found notes and gold to the amount of considerably over three hundred pounds, besides personal belongings of all sorts and kinds. It was obvious that nothing he possessed of the slightest value had been touched. He was recognized, rather vaguely, as a person who had made a disturbance at East Grinstead station, and it was there believed that three other persons had been with him. But on this point no one seemed certain. Nothing was ever heard of these three persons, so the belief remained a mere surmise.

About a week after the day on which I was at Mortlake, I saw a copy of a local paper published at East Grinstead. It contained an account of the death and funeral, at Rowfant, of an old man named Cooper. A line at the bottom stated that his wife, a very old lady, had left the neighborhood and gone to reside with some friends at Lewes. Because of the old man's death and of his wife's departure, I take it, nothing came of what might have been a clew, if the story had got abroad of the sojourn of the injured Pomeroy at Cooper's cottage.

Dugald Fergusson's mother, though she could hardly be expected to admit it, is, I think, happier with him dead than living. Alive, he was a constant cause of anxiety to her, and often of shame; now her mind is at rest. And not only so—she has enshrined him with a sort of halo. She regards him almost as a martyr, who met his death at the hands of wicked persons, under circumstances that were greatly to their discredit and to his honor. If the whole truth were ever to be known, it is possible that that halo would have to come off, and that she would be the poorer, and the sadder, for the loss of one of her most cherished illusions.

I believe that I am the only person, except his mother, who has a memento of that most erratic young man, and of the existence of that no one knows—not even his mother. It is a large, flat, oval-shaped locket made of gold, containing what I would describe as the portrait of a young lady. I have it in a drawer among other odds and ends, and sometimes, when I come upon it, I ask myself if it would not be the part of rectitude to hand it over to Mrs. Fergusson. But I tell myself that the act of handing over would have to be accompanied by such a vast deal of explanation that I doubt if I ever shall. I fancy the locket will remain in the drawer.



The Romance of an Ugly Policeman



P. G. Wodehouse

CROSSING the Thames by Chelsea Bridge, the wanderer through London finds himself in pleasant Battersea. Rounding the park, where the female of the species wanders with its young by the ornamental water where the wild fowl are, he comes upon a vast road. One side of this is given up to nature, the other to intellect; on the right, green trees stretch into the middle distance; on the left, endless blocks of residential flats. It is Battersea Park Road, the home of the cliff dwellers.

Police Constable Plimmer's beat embraced the first quarter of a mile of the cliffs. It was his duty to pace, in the measured fashion of the London policeman, along the front of them, turn to the right, turn to the left, and come back along the road that ran behind them. In this way he was enabled to keep the king's peace over no fewer than four blocks of mansions.

It did not require a deal of keeping. Battersea may have its tough citizens, but they do not live in Battersea Park Road. Battersea Park Road's specialty is brain, not crime. Authors, musicians, newspaper men, actors, and artists are the inhabitants of these mansions. A child could control them. They assault and batter nothing but pianos; they steal nothing but ideas; they murder nobody except Chopin and Beethoven. Not through these shall an ambitious young constable achieve promotion.

At this conclusion Edward Plimmer arrived within forty-eight hours of his installation. He recognized the flats for what they were—just so many layers of big-brained blamelessness. And there was not even the chance of a burglary. No burglar wastes his time burgling authors. Constable Plimmer reconciled his mind to the fact that his term in Battersea must be looked on as something in the nature of a vacation.

He was not altogether sorry. At first, indeed, he found the new atmosphere soothing. His last beat had been in the heart of tempestuous Whitechapel, where his arms had ached from the incessant hauling of wiry inebriates to the station, and his shins had revolted at the kicks showered upon them by haughty spirits impatient of restraint. Also, one Saturday night, three friends of a gentleman whom he was trying to induce not to murder his wife had so wrought upon him that, when he came out of hospital, his already homely appearance was further marred by a nose that resembled the gnarled root of a tree. All these things had taken from the charm of Whitechapel, and the cloistral peace of Battersea Park Road was comforting.

And just when the unbroken calm had begun to lose its attraction and dreams of action were once more troubling him, a new interest entered his life; and, with its coming, he ceased to wish to be removed from Battersea. He fell in love.

It happened at the back of the York Mansions. Anything that ever happens happens there, for it is at the back of these blocks of flats that the real life is. At the front you never see anything, except an occasional tousle-headed young man smoking a pipe; but at the back, where the cooks come out to parley with the tradesmen, there is at certain hours of the day quite a respectable activity. Pointed dialogues about yesterday's eggs and the toughness of Saturday's meat are conducted fortissimo between cheerful youths in the road and satirical young women in print dresses who come out of their kitchen doors onto little balconies.

The whole thing has a pleasing Romeo-and-Juliet touch. Romeo rattles up in his cart.

"Sixty-four!" he cries. "Sixty-fower, sixty-fower, sixty-fow——"

The kitchen door opens, and Juliet emerges. She eyes Romeo without any great show of affection.

"Are you Perkins & Blissett?" she inquires coldly. Romeo admits it. "Two of them yesterday's eggs was bad."

Romeo protests. He defends his eggs. They were fresh from the hen; he stood over her while she laid them. Juliet listens frigidly.

"I *don't* think!" she says. "Well, half of sugar, one marmalade, and two of breakfast bacon," she adds, and ends the argument.

There is a rattling as of a steamer weighing anchor; the goods go up in the tradesman's lift; Juliet collects them and exits, banging door. The little drama is over.

Such is life at the back of York Mansions—a busy, throbbing thing.

The peace of afternoon had fallen upon the world one day toward the end of Constable Plimmer's second week of the simple life, when his attention was attracted by a whistle. It was followed by a musical "Hi!"

Constable Plimmer looked up. On the kitchen balcony of a second-floor flat a girl was standing. As he took her in with a slow and exhaustive gaze, he was aware of strange thrills. There was something about this girl that excited Constable Plimmer. I do not say that she was a beauty; I do not claim that you or I would have raved about her; I merely say that Constable Plimmer thought she was All Right.

"Miss?" he said.

"Got the time about you?" said the girl. "All the clocks have stopped."

"The time," said Constable Plimmer, consulting his watch, "wants exactly ten minutes of four."

"Thanks."

"Not at all, miss."

The girl was inclined for conversation. It was that gracious hour of the day when you have cleared lunch and haven't got to think of dinner yet and have a bit of time to draw a breath or two. She leaned over the balcony and smiled pleasantly.

"If you want to know the time, ask a pleeceman," she said. "You been on this beat long?"

"Just short of two weeks, miss."

"I been here three days."

"I hope you like it, miss."

"So-so. The milkman's a nice boy."

Constable Plimmer did not reply. He was busy silently hating the milkman. He knew him—one of those good-looking blighters; one of those oiled and curled perishers; one of those blooming fascinators who go about the world making things hard for ugly, honest men with loving hearts. Oh, yes, he knew the milkman.

"He's a rare one with his jokes," said the girl.

Constable Plimmer went on not replying. He was perfectly aware that the milkman was a rare one with his jokes. He had heard him. The way girls fell for any one with the gift

of the gab—that was what embittered Constable Plimmer.

"He"—she giggled—"he calls me 'Little Pansyface.'"

"If you'll excuse me, miss," said Constable Plimmer coldly, "I'll have to be getting along on my beat."

Little Pansyface! And you couldn't arrest him for it! What a world! Constable Plimmer paced upon his way, a blue-clad volcano.

It is a terrible thing to be obsessed by a milkman. To Constable Plimmer's disordered imagination it seemed that, dating from this interview, the world became one solid milkman. Wherever he went, he seemed to run into this milkman. If he was in the front road, this milkman—Alf Brooks, it appeared, was his loathsome name—came rattling past with his jingling cans, as if he were Apollo driving his chariot. If he was around at the back, there was Alf, his damned tenor doing duets with the balconies. And all this in defiance of the known law of natural history that milkmen do not come out after five in the morning. This irritated Constable Plimmer. You talk of a man "going home with the milk" when you mean that he sneaks in in the small hours of the morning. If all milkmen were like Alf Brooks, the phrase was meaningless.

He brooded. The unfairness of fate was souring him. A man expects trouble in his affairs of the heart from soldiers and sailors, and to be cut out by even a postman is to fall before a worthy foe; but milkmen—no. Only grocers' assistants and telegraph boys were intended by Providence to fear milkmen.

Yet here was Alf Brooks, contrary to all natural rules, the established pet of the mansions. Bright eyes shone from balconies when his "Milk-oo-oo!" sounded. Golden voices giggled delightedly at his bellowed chaff. And Ellen Brown, whom he called "Little Pansyface," was definitely in love with him. They were keeping company. They were walking out.

This crushing truth Edward Plimmer learned from Ellen herself. She had slipped out to mail a letter at the pillar box on the corner, and she reached it just as the policeman arrived there in the course of his patrol.

Nervousness impelled Constable Plimmer to be arch.

"'Ullo, 'ullo, 'ullo!" he said. "Posting love letters?"

"What, me? This is to the police commissioner, telling him you're no good."

"I'll give it to him. Him and me are taking supper to-night."

Nature had never intended Constable Plimmer to be playful. He was at his worst when he rollicked. He snatched at the letter with what was meant to be a debonair gayety, and only succeeded in looking like an angry gorilla. The girl uttered a startled squeak.

The letter was addressed to Mr. A. Brooks.

Playfulness, after this, was at a discount. The girl was frightened and angry, and he was scowling with mingled jealousy and dismay.

"Ho!" he said. "Ho! Mr. A. Brooks!"

Ellen Brown was a nice girl, but she had a temper, and there were moments when her manners lacked rather noticeably the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Well, what about it?" she cried. "Can't one write to the young gentleman one's keeping company with, without having to get permission from every"—she paused to marshal her forces for the assault—"without having to get permission from every great, ugly, red-faced copper, with big feet and broken noses, in London?"

Constable Plimmer's wrath faded into a dull unhappiness. Yes, she was

right. That was the correct description. That was how an impartial Scotland Yard would be compelled to describe him, if ever he got lost: "Missing—a great, ugly, red-faced copper, with big feet and a broken nose." They would never find him otherwise.

"Perhaps you object to my walking out with Alf? Perhaps you've got something against him? I suppose you're jealous!"

She threw in the last suggestion entirely in a sporting spirit. She loved battle, and she had a feeling that this one was going to finish far too quickly. To prolong it, she gave him this opening. There were a dozen ways in which he might answer, each more insulting than the last; and then, when he had finished, she could begin again. These little encounters, she held, sharpened the wits, stimulated the circulation, and kept one out in the open air.

"Yes," said Constable Plimmer.

It was the one reply she was not expecting. For direct abuse, for sarcasm, for dignity, for almost any speech beginning, "What? Jealous of *you?* Why——" she was prepared. But this was incredible. It disabled her, as the wild thrust of an unskilled fencer will disable a master of the rapier. She searched in her mind, and found that she had nothing to say.

There was a tense moment in which she found him, looking her in the eyes, strangely less ugly than she had supposed; and then he was gone, rolling along on his beat with that air which all policemen must achieve, of having no feelings at all and—as long as it behaves itself—no interest in the human race.

Ellen posted her letter. She dropped it into the box thoughtfully, and thoughtfully returned to the flat. She looked over her shoulder, but Constable Plimmer was out of sight.

Peaceful Battersea began to vex Constable Plimmer. To a man crossed in love, action is the one anodyne. And Battersea gave no scope for action. He dreamed now of the old Whitechapel days as a man dreams of the joys of his childhood. He reflected bitterly that a fellow never knows when he is well off in this world. Any one of those myriad drunks and disorderlies would have been as balm to him now. He was like a man who has run through a fortune, and in poverty eats the bread of regret. Amazedly he recollected that in those happy days he had grumbled at his lot. He remembered confiding to a friend in the station house, as he had rubbed with liniment the spot on his right shin where the well-shod foot of a joyous costermonger had got home, that this sort of thing—meaning militant costermongers—was "a bit too thick." A bit too thick! Why, he would pay one to kick him now! And as for the three loyal friends of the would-be wife murderer who had broken his nose, if he had seen them coming round the corner, he would have welcomed them as brothers.

And Battersea Park Road dozed on—calm, intellectual, law-abiding.

A friend of his told him that there had once been a murder in one of these flats. He did not believe it. If any of these white-corpuscled clams ever swatted a fly, it was as much as they could do. The thing was ridiculous, on the face of it. If they were capable of murder, they would have murdered Alf Brooks.

He stood in the road and looked up at the placid buildings resentfully.

"Grr-rr-rr!" he growled, and kicked the sidewalk.

And, even as he spoke, on the balcony of a second-floor flat there appeared a woman—an elderly, sharp-faced woman, who waved her arms and screamed:

"Policeman! Officer! Come up here! Come up here at once!"

Up the stone stairs went Constable Plimmer on the run. His mind was alert and questioning. Murder? Hardly murder, perhaps. If it had been that, the woman would have said so. She did not look the sort of woman who would be reticent about a thing like that. Well, anyway, it was something! And Edward Plimmer had been long enough in Battersea to be thankful for small favors. An intoxicated husband would be better than nothing. At least he would be something that a fellow could get his hands onto and throw about a bit.

The sharp-faced woman was waiting for him at the door. He followed her into the flat.

"What is it, ma'am?"

"Theft! Our cook has been stealing."

She seemed sufficiently excited about it, but Constable Plimmer felt only depression and disappointment. A stout admirer of the sex, he hated arresting women. Moreover, to a man in the mood to tackle anarchists with bombs, to be confronted with petty theft is galling. But duty was duty. He produced his notebook.

"She is in her room. I locked her in. I have missed money. You must search her."

"Can't do that, ma'am. Female searcher at the station."

"Well, you can search her box."

A little, bald, nervous man in spectacles appeared, as if out of a trap. As a matter of fact, he had been there all the time, standing by the bookcase. But he was one of those men you do not notice till they move and speak.

"Er—Jane!"

"Well, Henry?"

The little man seemed to swallow something.

"I—I think that you may possibly be wronging Ellen. It is just possible, as regards the money——" He smiled in a ghastly manner, and turned to the policeman. "Er—officer, I ought to tell you that my wife—ah—holds the purse strings of our little home; and it is just possible that, in an absent-minded moment, *I* may have——"

"Do you mean to tell me, Henry, that *you* have been taking my money?"

"My dear, it is just possible that in an abs——"

"How often?"

He wavered perceptibly. Confidence was beginning to lose its grip.

"Oh, not often."

"*How* often? More than once?"

Conscience had shot its bolt. The little man gave up the struggle.

"No, no, not more than once. Certainly not more than once."

"You ought not to have done it at all. We will talk about that later. It doesn't alter the fact that Ellen is a thief. I have missed money half a dozen times. Step this way, officer."

Constable Plimmer stepped that way—his face a mask. He knew who was waiting for them behind the locked door at the end of the passage. But it was his duty to look as if he were stuffed, and he did so.

She was sitting on her bed, dressed for the street. It was her afternoon out, the sharp-faced woman had informed Constable Plimmer. She was pale, and there was a hunted look in her eyes.

"You wicked girl!" said the sharp-faced woman.

"I never took no money," answered the girl quietly.

"Well, it's gone, and money doesn't go by itself. Take her to the police station, officer."

Constable Plimmer raised heavy eyes.

"You make a charge, ma'am?"

"Bless the man! Of course I make a charge! What did you think I asked you to step in for?"

"Will you come along, miss?" said Constable Plimmer.

Out in the street the sun shone gayly down on peaceful Battersea. It was the hour when children walk abroad with their nurses; and from the green depths of the park came the sound of happy voices. A cat stretched itself in the sunshine, and eyed the two as they passed, with lazy content.

They walked in silence. Constable Plimmer was a man with a rigid sense of what was and what was not fitting behavior in a policeman on duty; he aimed always at a machinelike impersonality. There were times when it came hard, but he did his best. He strode on, his chin up and his eyes averted. And beside him——

Well, she was not crying. That was something.

Round the corner, beautiful in light flannel, gay at both ends with a new straw hat and the yellowest shoes in southwest London, scented, curled, a prince among young men, stood Alf Brooks. He was feeling piqued. When he said three o'clock, he meant three o'clock. It was now three-fifteen, and she had not appeared. Alf Brooks swore an impatient oath, and the thought crossed his mind, as it had sometimes crossed it before, that Ellen Brown was not the only girl in the world.

"Give her another five min——"

Ellen Brown, with escort, turned the corner.

Rage was the first emotion that the spectacle aroused in Alf Brooks. Girls who kept a fellow waiting about while they fooled around with policemen were no girls for him. They could understand once and for all that he was a man who could pick and choose.

And then an electric shock set the world dancing mistily before his eyes. This policeman was wearing his belt. He was on duty. And Ellen's face was not the face of a girl strolling with the force for pleasure.

His heart stopped, and then began to race. His cheeks flushed a dusky crimson. His jaw fell, and a prickly warmth glowed in the parts about his spine.

"Goo!"

His fingers sought his collar.

"Crumbs!"

He was hot all over.

"Goo' Lor'! She's bin pinched!"

He tugged at his collar. It was choking him.

Alf Brooks did not show up well in the first real crisis that life had forced upon him. That must be admitted. Later, when it was over and he had leisure for self-examination, he admitted it to himself. But even then he excused himself by asking space in a blustering manner what else he could 'a' done. And if the question did not bring much balm to his soul at the first time of asking, it proved wonderfully soothing on constant repetition. He repeated it at intervals for the next two days, and by the end of that time his cure was complete. On the third morning his "Milk-oo-oo!" had regained its customary carefree ring, and he was feeling that he had acted, in difficult circumstances, in the only possible manner.

Consider: He was Alf Brooks, well known and respected in the neighborhood, a singer in the choir on Sundays, owner of a milk walk in the most fashionable part of Battersea, to all practical purposes a public man. Was he to recognize, in broad daylight and in open street, a girl who walked with a policeman because she had to, a malefactor, a girl who had been pinched?

Ellen, Constable Plimmer woodenly at her side, came toward him. She was ten yards off—seven—five—three—one——

Alf Brooks tilted his hat over his eyes and walked past her, unseeing, a stranger.

He hurried on. He was conscious of a curious feeling that somebody was just going to kick him, but he dared not look around.

Constable Plimmer eyed the middle distance with an earnest gaze. His face was redder than ever. Beneath his blue tunic strange emotions were at work. Something seemed to be filling his throat. He tried to swallow it.

He stopped in his stride. The girl glanced up at him in a kind of dull, questioning wonder. Their eyes met for the first time that afternoon, and it seemed to Constable Plimmer that whatever it was that was interfering with the inside of his throat had grown larger and more unmanageable.

There was the misery of the stricken animal in her gaze. He had seen women look like that in Whitechapel. The woman to whom indirectly he owed his broken nose had looked like that. As his hand had fallen on the collar of the man who was kicking her to death, he had seen her eyes. They were Ellen's eyes, as she stood there now—tortured, crushed, yet uncomplaining.

Constable Plimmer looked at Ellen, and Ellen looked at Constable Plimmer. Down the street some children were playing with a dog. In one of the flats a woman had begun to sing.

"Hop it!" said Constable Plimmer.

He spoke gruffly. He found speech difficult.

The girl started.

"What say?"

"Hop it! Get along! Run away!"

"What do you mean?"

Constable Plimmer scowled. His face was scarlet. His jaw protruded like a granite breakwater.

"Go on!" he growled. "Hop it! Tell him it was all a joke. I'll explain at the station."

Understanding seemed to come to her slowly.

"Do you mean I'm to go?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? You aren't going to take me to the station?"

"No."

She stared at him. Then suddenly she broke down.

"He wouldn't look at me! He was ashamed of me! He pretended not to see me!"

She leaned against the wall, her back shaking.

"Well, run after him, and tell him it was all——"

"No! No! No!"

Constable Plimmer looked morosely at the sidewalk. He kicked it.

She turned. Her eyes were red, but she was no longer crying. Her chin had a brave tilt.

"I couldn't—not after what he did. Let's go along. I—I don't care."

She looked at him curiously.

"Were you really going to let me go?"

Constable Plimmer nodded. He was aware of her eyes searching his face, but he did not meet them.

"Why?"

He did not answer.

"What would have happened to you if you had done?"

Constable Plimmer's scowl was of the stuff of which nightmares are made. He kicked the unoffending sidewalk with an increased viciousness.

"Dismissed the force," he said curtly.

"And sent to prison, too, I shouldn't wonder."

"Maybe."

He heard her draw a deep breath, and silence fell upon them again. The dog down the road had stopped barking. The woman in the flat had stopped singing. They were curiously alone.

"Would you have done all that for me?" she said.

"Yes."

"Why?"

He swung around on her, almost threateningly.

"Why?" he said hoarsely. "Because I love you. That's why. Now I've said it, and now you can go on and laugh at me as much as you want."

"I'm not laughing," she said soberly.

"You think I'm a fool."

"No, I don't."

"I'm nothing to you. *He's* the fellow you're stuck on."

She gave a little shudder.

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"I've changed." She paused. "I think I shall have changed more by the time I come out."

"Come out?"

"Come out of prison."

"You're not going to prison."

"Yes, I am."

"I won't take you."

"Yes, you will. Think I'm going to let you get yourself in trouble like that, to get me out of a fix? Not much!"

"You hop it, like a good girl."

"Not me!"

He stood looking at her like a puzzled bear.

"They can't eat me."

"They'll cut off all of your hair."

"D'you like my hair?"

"Yes."

"Well, it'll grow again."

"Don't stand talking. Hop it!"

"I won't. Where's the station?"

"Next street."

"Well, come along, then."

The blue glass lamp of the police station came into sight, and for an instant she stopped. Then she was walking on again, her chin tilted. But her voice shook a little as she spoke:

"Nearly there. Next stop, Battersea. All change! I say, mister—I don't know your name."

"Plimmer's my name, miss. Edward Plimmer."

"I wonder if—I mean it'll be pretty lonely where I'm going—I wonder if —— What I mean is, it would be rather a lark, when I come out, if I was to find a pal waiting for me to say 'Hello!'"

Constable Plimmer braced his ample feet against the stones, and turned purple.

"Miss," he said, "I'll be there, if I have to sit up all night. The first thing you'll see when they open the doors is a great, ugly, red-faced copper, with big feet and a broken nose. And, miss"—he clenched his hands till the nails hurt the leathern flesh—"and, miss, there's just one thing more I'd like to say. You'll be having a good deal of time to yourself for a while—you'll be able to do a good bit of thinking without any one to disturb you; and what I'd like you to give your mind to, if you don't object, is just to think whether you can't forget that narrow-chested, God-forsaken blighter who treated you so mean, and get halfway fond of some one who knows jolly well you're the only girl there is."

She looked past him at the lamp that hung, blue and forbidding, over the station door.

"How long'll I get?" she said. "What will they give me? Thirty days?"

He nodded.

"It won't take me as long as that," she said. "I say, what do people call you—people who are fond of you, I mean? Eddie, or Ted?"

The world pirouetted before Constable Plimmer's eyes. A small boy passed, rattling a stick along the railings of the houses opposite. To Constable Plimmer the sound was like the music of some celestial harp.

"Eddie," he murmured coyly.

There was a silence.

"Well, hadn't we better be getting along, Eddie?" said the girl.

Constable Plimmer gulped.

"*I* know you never took no money," he said.

"Thank you, Eddie."

There was a sound of hurried footsteps. Along the street came trotting a small, spectacled figure.

"Officer!" he cried. "Officer!"

It was the little man of the flat, the husband of the sharp-faced woman, the insignificant individual to whom, when in conversation with Ellen, the sharp-faced woman—with unconscious humor—alluded as "the master." He was very warm and very nervous.

Constable Plimmer, sinking the human being in him, resumed his official woodenness.

"Sir?" he said.

"Officer, there has been a—a—a slight mistake. My wife and I have—ah—talked it over—talked it over—and—er—we have come to the conclusion that there has been a slight mistake. We—ah—circumstances have arisen which make it clear that—er—Ellen did not take the money. In short, we—er—wish to withdraw the charge."

He turned and pattered away. Constable Plimmer regarded him with amazement. This thing had come to him with all the force of unexpectedness. To him it was like the curtain of one of those melodramas that, as a boy, he had been wont to frequent down Stoke Newington way, before he had become a member of the force and put off childish things. There was always a point in those dramas where somebody, without warning, popped up and settled everything with a word.

But Ellen, more familiar with the circumstances, was able to trace the chain of events that had led up to the dramatic intervention; and there was a kindly and understanding light in her eyes as she watched the little man disappear.

"Well, you never can tell!" she said, "Fancy him having the pluck! Of course, I knew it was him that had taken the money all the time, but what could you do when he denied it? And no sooner had we gone than he up and tells her that it was him. I wonder what made him do it?"

Constable Plimmer could answer that. He had seen the thing happen often in moving-picture dramas.

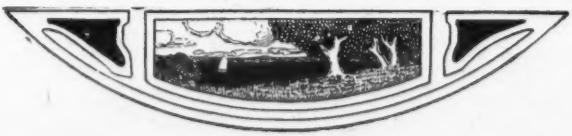
"Remorse," he said. "Havin' made a false accusation, his conscience give him what for, and he confessed. That's what it was—remorse."

Ellen sighed.

"Poor little bloke!" she said pitifully. "I'll bet it ain't nothing to the remorse he's going to have from now on, with her having this against him. She's a hard woman, she is. 'Talked it over,' he said they did. I believe him. And they'll talk it over a lot more before he hears the last of it. There's an awful lot of unhappiness knocking around, Eddie. There's an awful lot of fellows go getting married to the wrong woman, ain't there, Eddie?"

Constable Plimmer looked up the street and down the street. There was nobody in sight. He drew Ellen to him, and blushingly enveloped her with a vast blue arm.

"But," he argued, "on the other hand, there's one or two go getting married to the right one, ain't there? How would it be if I was to pop round and see about putting up them banns when I come off duty to-night?"





The plays, exclusive of musical comedy, that are reviewed in this department are those bulletined by the New York Center of the Drama League.

WHETHER it is really darkest just before dawn, as the proverb says, is not matter for dispute among dramatic critics, but rather among such proverbial early birds as are out to catch the late—and no doubt dissolute—young worms who are abroad at that hour. There has never seemed any logical reason why it should be darker then than at midnight. But let us believe, for an instant, that it is, so that we may have at least the excuse of veracity for referring so trite but eminently applicable a saying to our present dramatic situation. The season has been one long night; the dense, black emptiness of last month seemed hopeless and impenetrable, yet out of that darkness has come the dawn.

Winthrop Ames has produced Alice Brown's ten-thousand-dollar prize play, "Children of Earth," and it is a play for Americans to be proud of. Granville Barker has come from England with Lillah McCarthy, O. P. Heggie, the famous Rothenstein decorations, and a repertory consisting of Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion," Anatole France's "Man Who Married a Dumb Wife," "Midsummer Night's Dream," Shaw's "Doctor's Dilemma," and Barker's own much-discussed "Madras House," and prepares to present them to New York audiences under the auspices of the Stage Society. Herr Emanuel Reicher, one of the greatest German actors and producers, the man who gave not only Gerhardt Hauptmann and Ernst Hardt, but Ibsen, Tolstoy, and Strindberg a place on the German stage, announces a series of subscription performances of Hauptmann's "Elga," Ibsen's "John Gabriel Borkman," Tchekoff's "Cherry Orchard," Bjornsen's last comedy, and other modern masterpieces. So there is every chance that the man who is really interested in drama may have all he wants of it in New York during the next two or three months; more, in fact, than he generally gets in an entire year.

In spite of the unusual quality of the foreign productions, the event of greatest importance to us is the presentation of "Children of Earth." There are probably plenty of good American citizens in Kansas who not only did not contribute plays to the ten-thousand-dollar prize contest instituted by Mr. Ames for American playwrights, but who have not, to this day, heard of the

contest itself or of the fact that Miss Alice Brown, an accomplished New England story writer, a woman over fifty, won the prize with her first long play "Children of Earth." But from Maine to California, on the other hand, there are hundreds of young playwrights who did submit plays, and they, and the thousands of people interested in the future of American drama, looked forward to this production as a milestone.

A press agent's story says that requests for tickets began to reach the theater ten weeks before the opening. This may or may not be true, but it is true that no play in years has been so much discussed before its presentation. It was generally agreed, in advance, by people who knew nothing about the play, that it would be a good picture of New England life, with a strong and slightly morbid heart interest, because that was Miss Brown's "line"; that it would be good literature, but bad playwriting, because the technique of the stage is either an instinct or a science, and a woman of Miss Brown's long devotion to the tale was evidently not an instinctive playwright, nor could she bring to her first long play the necessary scientific preparation. Moreover, it was quite as generally, though somewhat less openly, agreed in advance that the play was probably not the very best of those submitted, but the best that stood a chance of commercial success, because even Mr. Ames, to whom the theater is a hobby, could not wish to pay ten thousand dollars for the joy of adding another failure to dramatic history and another set of expensive scenes to the winter's growing collection in the storehouses.

Now that "Children of Earth" has been produced in a beautiful playhouse, with artistic settings, and a cast of high, even excellence rarely seen in this country, it is interesting to compare the facts of the case with the advance verdict. It is interesting to see how almost right and yet absolutely wrong the advance verdict was. "Children of Earth" is vital, convincing, poetic American drama, and yet it has all the qualities attributed to it except one.

Even at the first performance, it was obvious that whatever else the play was, it was not commercial, distinctly not one that would wake up the next morning to find itself famous and popular in New York. Whether it will ever find its audience in a world that is too tired for conscience and middle age and poetry, remains to be seen. If it does, it will not be by the help of critics like the one of a well-known morning daily, who left after the second act, probably for fear that he might really be seeing a good American play, and so not be able to damn them indiscriminately in the future as he has in the past.

Apart from its lack of commercialism, it was what people said it would be in all important respects. It is a fine, true picture of New England life, and the heart interest is as strong and slightly more morbid than was expected. And it is not good playwriting in the sense that Henry Arthur Jones' plays always are; not, as some one said of "The Lie," "the same old bag of tricks, of course, but such a splendid old bag." There are, in fact, no tricks at all in Miss Brown's work—just the straightforward telling, in dramatic form, of the intensely dramatic story of Mary Ellen Barstow's middle-aged awakening to love, her mad dash for it with her married lover, Peter Hale, and the quiet creeping home in answer to the one call that seems irresistible to a New England woman—that of conscience.

There are no juveniles to form a comic relief. Those who are there—Anita Barstow, Mary Ellen's niece, and young Adam Hale, Peter's cousin—being a part of the story—a picture of what Mary and Peter were in their own

youth, and of what life might have meant to them, if love had found them in love's accustomed time and hour. The other characters in the play are not types, but people; not picked to form a dramatic group, but grouped to show a complex human relationship.

The most daring characterization of them all is that of Peter Hale, a New England farmer with the soul of a poet, a man who is not afraid to say, in the face of the Puritan world, that he loves springtime and running water and apple trees in bloom. Beside him, Miss Brown has placed, in splendid dramatic contrast, the strange figure of his Portuguese wife, a woman in whom the love of liquor has killed the love of man, but not the eager, passionate devotion to a gentle woman like Mary Ellen Barstow.

A good many people have wondered why men so versed in the mechanics of dramatic art as Winthrop Ames, Adolph Klauber, and Augustus Thomas, the judges in the contest, should have chosen a play of imperfect workmanship for the prize. The answer seems obviously to be that they had seen so many well-written plays that were not worth writing that they responded quickly to the pleasure of a work that lived and gripped and convinced.

People who see "Children of Earth" at the Booth Theater have one advantage over the judges; they see the characters in the play actually live before their eyes. Gilda Varesi's playing of *Jane Hale,* the Portuguese woman, is on such a high plane that it seems impossible to characterize it except by the inexpressive word "perfect." Effie Shannon has never done anything better than, and nothing with such spiritual quality as, *Mary Ellen Barstow.* Herbert Kelcey forgets himself completely to become *Mary Ellen's* successful brother, *Aaron Barstow,* whose daughter, *Anita,* is well played by Olive Wyndham. A. E. Anson, as *Peter Hale,* and Reginald Barlow, as *Nathan Buell,* the wreck of the youth to whose memory Mary Ellen has devoted twenty-six years, are in fine contrast. Cecil Yapp adds another to his list of unusual character parts in *Uncle Eph Grout,* the village idiot, whose lapses from imbecility to mere feeble-mindedness were the author's and not the actor's. And when it is added that Theodor von Eltz as *Adam Hale,* and Mrs. Kate Jepson as *Cynthia Coleman,* do ample justice to small parts, there is not only a record of the entire cast, but a record of the fact that competence in small parts improves rather than detracts from the star's chances of success, and that nothing can make really fine acting except fine teamwork.

The curtain raiser, by Anatole France, with which Granville Barker opened his repertory season at Wallack's Theater, offered nothing more than a delightful opportunity for the actors, producers, and audience to orient themselves in their new surroundings. The man who married a dumb wife, had her cured at great expense, and then preferred to be deaf himself rather than go on listening to her eternal flow of words, is hardly a new figure, or one especially calculated to arouse our sense of the humorous at this late day. The author's treatment of the theme lacks his customary charm and distinction, and Lillah McCarthy, with all her dignity and grace, made the wife a magpie when a mosquito would have been much more effective.

Yet the memory of the piece is entirely one of pleasure, of rhythmic speech and motion, of harmony, of color, simplicity, and unity of dramatic design and effect. It is more the memory of a piece of fine old tapestry, with the shades of orange predominating, than of a play. In other words, the play reversed the usual order and appeared as a setting for the scene—or

decoration, as Mr. Barker prefers to call it. There was something peculiarly gracious in Mr. Barker's allowing his opening curtain to rise on a decoration in the new style by a young American artist, Robert E. Jones, whose work is better known in Germany and England than at home. And the decoration was well worthy of the courtesy accorded it.

In "Androcles and the Lion," which followed the curtain raiser, George Bernard Shaw is at his best—amusing, humorous, satirical, and deeply serious. The farce, as it is called, is really a fable, based on the story of the meek Christian martyr, Androcles, the lover of men and animals, who takes a thorn from the foot of a lion in the jungle and is rewarded when the lion refuses to eat him in the arena. Little is added to the story itself in Shaw's telling, but Androcles is surrounded by other Christian martyrs who are taking the same road as he to martyrdom, and the gaps in the action are filled by the characterization of these types—Lavinia, the beautiful patrician; the giant, Ferrovius, with the vision of a Christian and the unsubdued right arm of a son of Mars; their comrades, the brave and the cowards; all set against a background of Roman soldiers, patricians, and slave drivers.

From the moment the curtain rises on the vivid, flatly painted, flapping, symbolic jungle, one knows that he is in a wilderness of fun, and stays there contentedly laughing through the acts; laughing when Androcles refuses to quarrel with his wife; when the Roman soldiers march to the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers"; when a renegade martyr flies, by mistake, straight into the lion's jaw; when Ferrovius comes back from the arena with the blood of six gladiators on his sword, and the Christian soul dead within him. But to let the final curtain fall on "Androcles and the Lion" and to come away saying that Shaw has done the impossible in making an audience laugh uproariously and without shame at Christian martyrs and martyrdom is to ignore—probably to wish to ignore—the fact that Shaw has done this only because "Androcles and the Lion" has absolutely nothing to do with the heroes of the early church.

Certainly anybody who knows the Shaw of "Widowers' Houses," "Mrs. Warren's Profession," "The Doctor's Dilemma," knows that there is nobody in the world's history about whom Shaw is less concerned than the early martyrs, and that he would not waste his time, at this point in his career of tearing down the world's stupidities by the force of his laughter, to laugh at people who do not interest him. The advantage that "Androcles and the Lion" has, as a farce, lies just in the fact that it is still a fine farce, even if people are too stupid or too stubborn to read social martyr for Christian martyr, vegetarian for Androcles, vulgar English peers for patricians, and minister of the Church of England for Ferrovius.

There are plenty of people who call Shaw a traitor because he was true to his faith as a socialist after war was declared, who call "Common Sense About the War" an evidence of his limitless buffoonery, who see nothing to suggest a date later than the first century in "Androcles and the Lion," and to whom Ferrovius is a funny giant and not a prophecy.

But even they will agree that O. P. Heggie as *Androcles,* Phil Dwyer as the inimitable *Lion,* Lionel Braham as *Ferrovius,* are living stage portraits; that the Rothenstein decorations are as interesting as they were announced to be; that the apron stage is a successful advance; and that Granville Barker, as a producer, is eminently welcome to our shores.

FOR BOOK LOVERS

IN his return to his more familiar style of story-telling, Mr. E. Phillips Oppenheim has been well advised. His recent books have not been especially fortunate experiments—for they have certainly given the impression of being experiments—and we may fairly conclude that Mr. Oppenheim has convinced himself of that fact by his resumption, in "Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo," published by Little, Brown & Co., of the theme of the secret diplomacy of Europe.

The scene of the story is laid in Monte Carlo, and its action grows out of an international conspiracy, engineered by agents of Germany and Russia, to break up the Triple Entente. Draconmeyer, a great German banker, resident in London, Senlinger, an attaché of the German foreign office, and Mr. Grex, who turns out to be a Russian grand duke, have arranged an interview with M. Douaille, the French prime minister, to present to him what amounts to a bribe to guarantee the neutrality of France in a war for the destruction of England and the German colonization of South America.

A single individual threatens the successful consummation of this pretty scheme—an Englishman, of course. Lord Hunterlys, on a secret mission to the Balkan states as the representative of the British foreign office, has, by chance, discovered traces of the conspiracy, and has promptly betaken himself to Monte Carlo. But even so, and with all the resources of the British government behind him, Lord Hunterlys might have failed but for the timely assistance of the young American millionaire, Richard Lane.

Mr. Oppenheim, with his usual skill, has woven into this plot the human interest without which the story would hardly be a story.

The estrangement and final reconciliation of Hunterlys and his wife, and the mad wooing of the grand duke's daughter by young Lane, give the illusion of a real story rather than of the dry details of a diplomatic blue book.

* * *

It is a rather interesting phenomenon, in the making and publication of works of fiction, that expert knowledge of conditions of life or of localities seems to handicap its possessor when he undertakes to construct a story based upon it. In this particular field, a little knowledge is far from being a dangerous thing—it is a great deal of knowledge that works havoc with attempts to transpose it into a story, probably because it swamps the writer's sense of perspective. In such cases the human element is lost to sight or at any rate unduly subordinated to the conditions or locality. And, strangely enough, the story or novel is urged upon the reading public chiefly because of the author's specific knowledge of what is called its "theme." If readers only learned to beware of this partic-

ular recommendation, they might save themselves considerable disappointment.

A case in point is Samuel Hopkins Adams' novel, "The Clarion," published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. It is a story of the abuses practiced by newspaper publishers and editors. The announcement of the book states, among other things, that "it is safe to say that there is no one in America who knows more about newspaper methods than Samuel Hopkins Adams," the inference, of course, being that no one is in a better position to write a novel about them. The important thing is that the author knows his subject, not that he is gifted as a story-teller. This latter fact, to be sure, is not entirely ignored, for it is also stated that "the characters are living men and women etched against a background of tangled interests and passions." Unfortunately that is just what they are not. They are rather pawns in the game of events.

Another book of precisely the same type is "The Fakers," by Samuel G. Blythe, published by the George H. Doran Company. Reference is made to these two books in this way and in this place because both are conspicuous examples of a tendency in fiction which, as we think, is discouraging to, and to that extent destructive of, attempts at creative work in fiction.

It is realism carried to extremes. It is the transcription, under cover of fiction, of observed facts—a process in which the imagination of the author plays no part.

This is a story of what may be called inside politics in Washington, following, with a wealth of detail, the career of F. Marmaduke Hicks, a young man without any equipment for responsible duty in life other than a glib tongue and an unlimited supply of bounce, two things that, as all the United States knows, carry their possessors to high and distinguished positions at the capital of the country.

Of course, in this case, as in the preceding one, the publisher could not resist the temptation to tell us of Mr. Blythe's specific qualification—his "marvelous knowledge of inside politics."

An intensely interesting novel is the translation of one of Marcel Prevost's recent stories under the title of "Guardian Angels," published by the Macaulay Company.

The title is evidently a bit of Gallic irony, intended to give point to the danger involved in the employment, by families of the Parisian smart set, of unknown young women as governesses.

It is to be presumed that M. Prevost has not been obliged to rely wholly on his imagination for the pictures he has drawn of Magda, Fannie Smith, Sandra, and Rosalie. And it is possible, on the other hand, that he felt justified, upon artistic grounds, in accentuating the peculiar characteristics of these four young women, to add to the vividness of his picture without impairing its essential truthfulness.

It is rather difficult to conceive of more cold-blooded unscrupulousness than three of these girls display. Rosalie, the pretty Belgian, is the exception, because of her lack of experience, but her good intentions do not relieve her of responsibility for her part in wrecking the household in which she lived.

What is commonly called "immorality" is, of course, one of the features of the narrative. Blackmail and robbery are also added to the repertory of the "guardian angels," and the result of it all is, to put it mildly, unpleasant.

Nevertheless, the book is, to the critical taste at least, interesting because of its craftsmanship, and, as the trans-

lation is an excellent one, its strong points may be appreciated in its English form.

"The Sealed Valley," by Hulbert Footner, published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is a Western novel that recalls "The Squaw Man," not because of any similarity in plot, but rather because of the care taken to evade the issue raised in the play.

The theme of the story is the infatuation of Doctor Ralph Cowdray, a young man with an Eastern training and Eastern traditions, for a pretty Indian girl, who, in spite of her primitive life, is sufficiently experienced in the ways of civilized men to understand the probable consequences of marriage with one of them, and sufficiently strong to refuse to harbor the idea.

The doctor enthusiastically offers to renounce not merely his practice—which, to be sure, is not much—but all his prospects, for the privilege of living in the wilderness with the Indian maiden. But she cannily declines to take the chances with him. And not only does she do that, but—perhaps to show her interest in him—she picks out a paleface sister as the proper mate for him.

If it had not been for his acceptance of the choice thus made by Nahuya, we would have been inclined to feel sorry for him. But his easy compliance in this respect raises the suspicion that his affection for Nahuya was hardly deep enough for real drama.

Another volume of Algernon Blackwood's short stories has recently been published by Macmillan under the title of "Incredible Adventures."

They are of the same general character as those contained in "Ten Minute Stories."

All of these stories are based upon the presumption of the reality of supernatural influences and their active participation in the everyday facts of life. And as Mr. Blackwood is an exceedingly finished workman, his stories are significant and interesting.

The best of the present collection are "The Regeneration of Lord Ernie," "The Damned," and "A Descent Into Egypt." They are most unusual tales, and, we believe, will hold the interest of almost any reader.

Nevertheless, it is with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction that one closes the volume. There is an uneasy sense that the author has failed to make his points clearly; a conviction that Mr. Blackwood's conception of what is called "the occult" is more or less factitious, and that, in consequence, his symbolism is at fault. It is a pity, for, in almost every case, he has a plot that could, under other circumstances, have been developed into something marvelously graphic and convincing.

Important New Books

"God's Country and the Woman," James O. Curwood; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The Other Kind of Girl," Anonymous; B. W. Huebsch.

"The Little Straw Wife," Margaret B. Houston; H. K. Fly Co.

"Detective Barney," Harvey J. O'Higgins; Century Co.

"A Set of Six," Joseph Conrad; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Mrs. Martin's Man," St. John G. Ervine; Macmillan Co.

"The Day," J. M. Barrie; Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Contemporary Portraits," Frank Harris; Mitchell Kennerley.

"Children of the Earth," Alice Brown; Macmillan Co.

"The Turmoil," Booth Tarkington; Harper & Bros.

"My Heart's Right There," Florence Barclay; G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"The Yellow Claw," Sax Rohmer; McBride, Nast & Co.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

A BRILLIANT, full-length novel by Marie Van Vorst, author of "Big Tremaine," will be printed complete in the May number of AINSLEE'S. Antony, the hero, from whom the story takes its title, is a penniless young Southerner who comes to New York to develop his genius for sculpture. His struggles against his own pride and the world in general, his tangled love affairs, his achievement of fame in Paris, and his ultimate finding of the true heroine of the story, all go to make a novel that will add to even Miss Van Vorst's reputation.

Those of you who knew John Tremaine when he was first published in AINSLEE'S will be glad to know that his political success did not stop with the nomination for Congress in his own story; since coming out in cloth covers, he has been elected by the book-buying public to the lists of "best sellers" in Boston, Detroit, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and other discriminating cities.

CHAMPAGNE served in a beer mug wouldn't taste the same. A heart of gold can be thoroughly obscured behind a dickey and a made-up tie. While the cover doesn't make the magazine any more than clothes make the man, it is to the advantage of both to be fittingly dressed. AINSLEE'S has never been careless in this respect. Its clothes have been designed by such authorities in magazine dress as Harrison Fisher, Lester Ralph, Penrhyn Stanlaws, Henry Hutt, James Montgomery Flagg, Clarence Underwood, and A. B. Wenzell.

Howard Chandler Christy, the most popular magazine artist in America, has been engaged to paint a series of twelve "New American Beauty" pictures to be used for covers exclusively on AINSLEE'S. As you must have noticed, we are wearing the first of them to-day. Don't you think it's becoming? You will excuse us for having strutted in front of the mirror a little?

SPEAKING before teachers of journalism at Columbia University recently, Chester S. Lord, long famous as managing editor of the New York *Sun*, expressed the opinion that we are now living in a commercial, not a literary, age, and that people are no longer a-hunger for literary food. "I can see plainly," he said, "how this transition is affecting the newspapers, how it is changing our choice of topics from literary topics to commercial topics, and is changing our very diction from a refinement of literary expression to a blunter and a coarser form of expression. The so-called human-interest story, so popular a few years ago; the romantic story, the pathetic, the sentimental—all possess less fascination for the public."

While it is undoubtedly true that in the newspapers of to-day we find no worthy successors to Richard Harding Davis' *Van Bibber*, George Ade's *Doc Horne*, Townsend's *Chimmie Fadden*, and all the rest of them, is this due to any loss of appetite for such literary fare on the part of the public? Is not the explanation, rather, the popular-priced magazine? The present-day tendency is "a place for everything and everything in its place." We still want our human interest and romance, our pathos and sentiment, but we want it in our magazines. In our newspapers we look for news.

In the days when magazines were few in number and high in price, the newspaper was the only outlet for the new writer who was so bent upon making you see and feel a real story just as he felt and saw it that he split an infinitive or two in his enthusiasm. The popular-priced magazines are taking care of those men to-day, and are giving them a wider field of endeavor, with its consequently greater harvest of appreciation, than they ever enjoyed before. We believe that as a result the short story, which to our mind is the ideal form for the expression of American life, has progressed

farther in this country in the last twenty years than it had in all the years previous.

Perhaps there is no H. C. Bunner or Bret Harte or Frank Stockton writing to-day. But pick up any magazine of their time and read all the stories. Then read the fiction in some current magazine, and compare the two. We think you will agree with us that the reading appetite of to-day demands much better fare than it did before the advent of the popular magazine.

THE short stories for the May number are an unusually entertaining and widely varied collection, well worthy of a place in the same magazine with Marie Van Vorst's splendid novel.

Wells Hastings has never written a brighter, more human tale than "Aw, Shut Up!" in which a cynical New York youth is simultaneously bitten by the modern-dance germ and hit by one of Cupid's arrows. In spite of the fact that his wounds give no sign of ever healing, he seems more than content to make the best of them.

In "Dolan's Three Wishes," Harold Kellock has written one of those rare little gems that make us doubly certain that our remarks in a preceding paragraph are justified. Mark Twain once wrote that if the brave man is he who knows no fear, then the flea is the bravest creature in the world; for, all unconscious of impending danger, he blithely skips about attacking bodies that are to him as all the armies of the earth would be to a single man. This Dolan of Mr. Kellock's *did* know fear, and was brave because of it.

Elmer Brown Mason, whose delightful "Canary Fritz and Mimi Jaune" will be remembered by many of you, gives us another appealing little romance of New York's Italian quarter, "An Idyl of Sullivan Street." In "The Judgment of Spring," Marie Conway Oemler seems to have caught the fragrant breath of spring itself.

Among other contributors of fiction to the May issue will be Richard Le Gallienne; Clarence Budington Kelland, with a new series called "Cupid in Diversity"; Constance Skinner; and F. Berkeley Smith.

The next of Albert Payson Terhune's super-woman series will introduce "Semiramis, the Original Wonder Woman," who, starting life a foundling, nearly four thousand years ago, before women were elected to office in the regular way, made herself Queen of Assyria. She built roads and reservoirs; she founded the city of Babylon; she subdued Persia, Egypt, most of Ethiopia, and parts of India; and incidentally led her own armies in hundreds of victories. As for her love affairs, a list of her admirers would furnish names for new brands of cigarettes for years to come.

IF A. G. S——, who wrote to us concerning an AINSLEE poem and a story, will send us her address, we shall be very glad to furnish the information desired.





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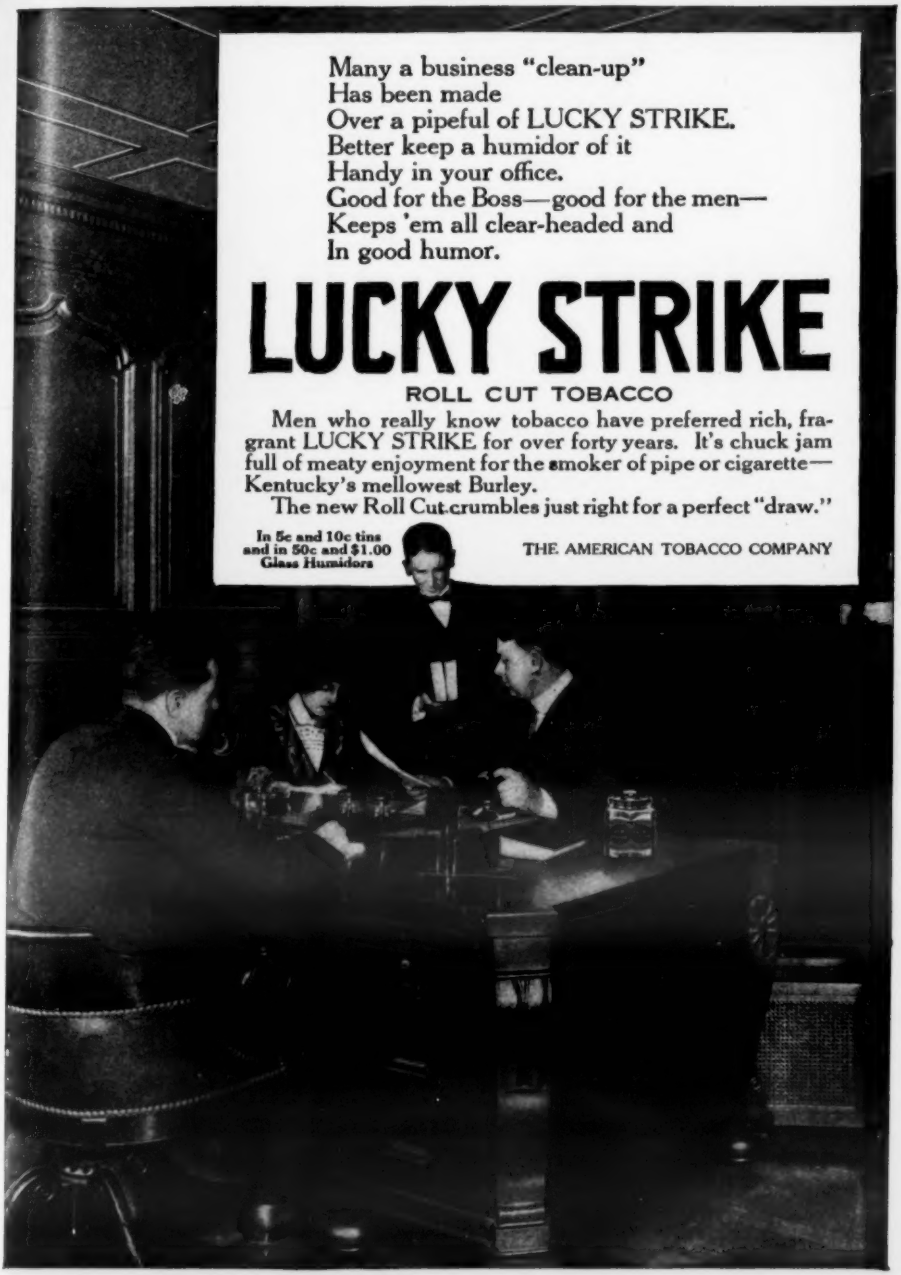
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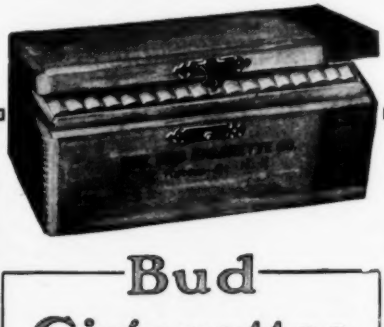
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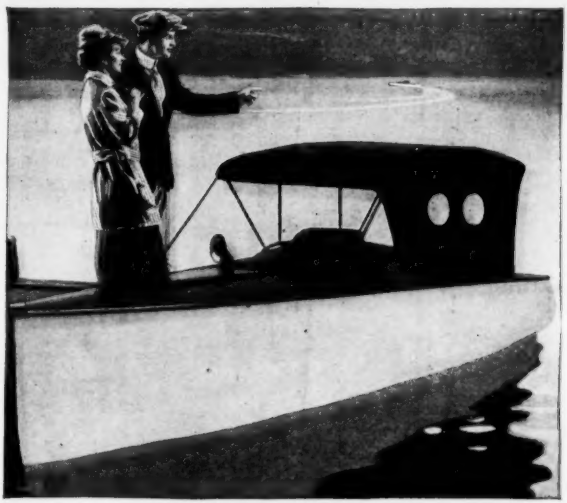
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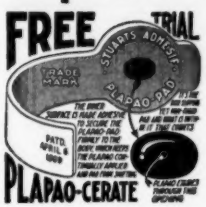
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Inner surface is self-adhesive, so pad cannot slip, shift out of place or press against bone and chafe the skin. Most comfortable to wear as there are no straps, springs or buckles attached.

SOFT AS VELVET
Easy to Apply—Inexpensive

The Plapao-Pads are continuous in their action—no delay from work. Over 250,000 now in use prove their wonderful efficiency—without question the most scientific, logical and **successful** treatment for rupture the world has ever known. Awarded Gold Medal at Rome—Grand Prix at Paris.

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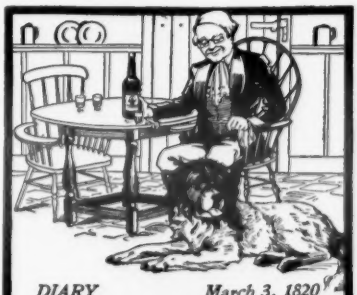
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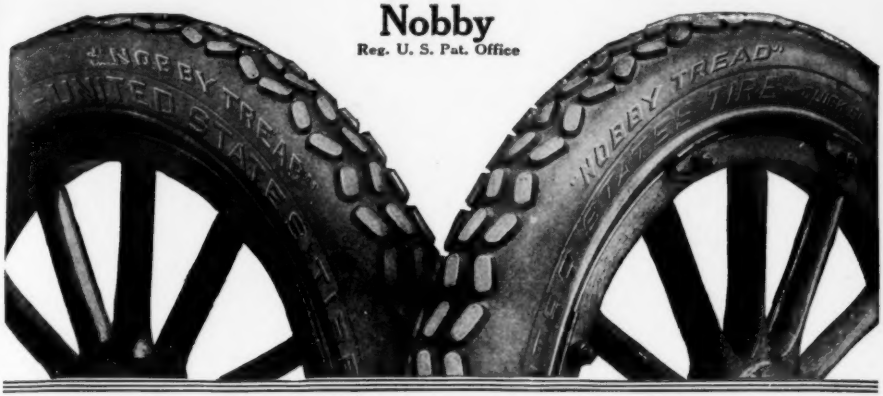
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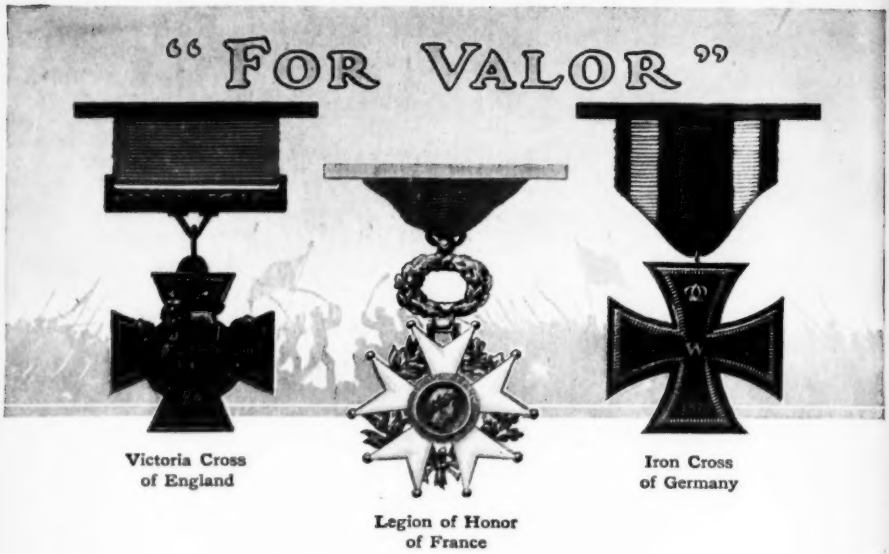
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